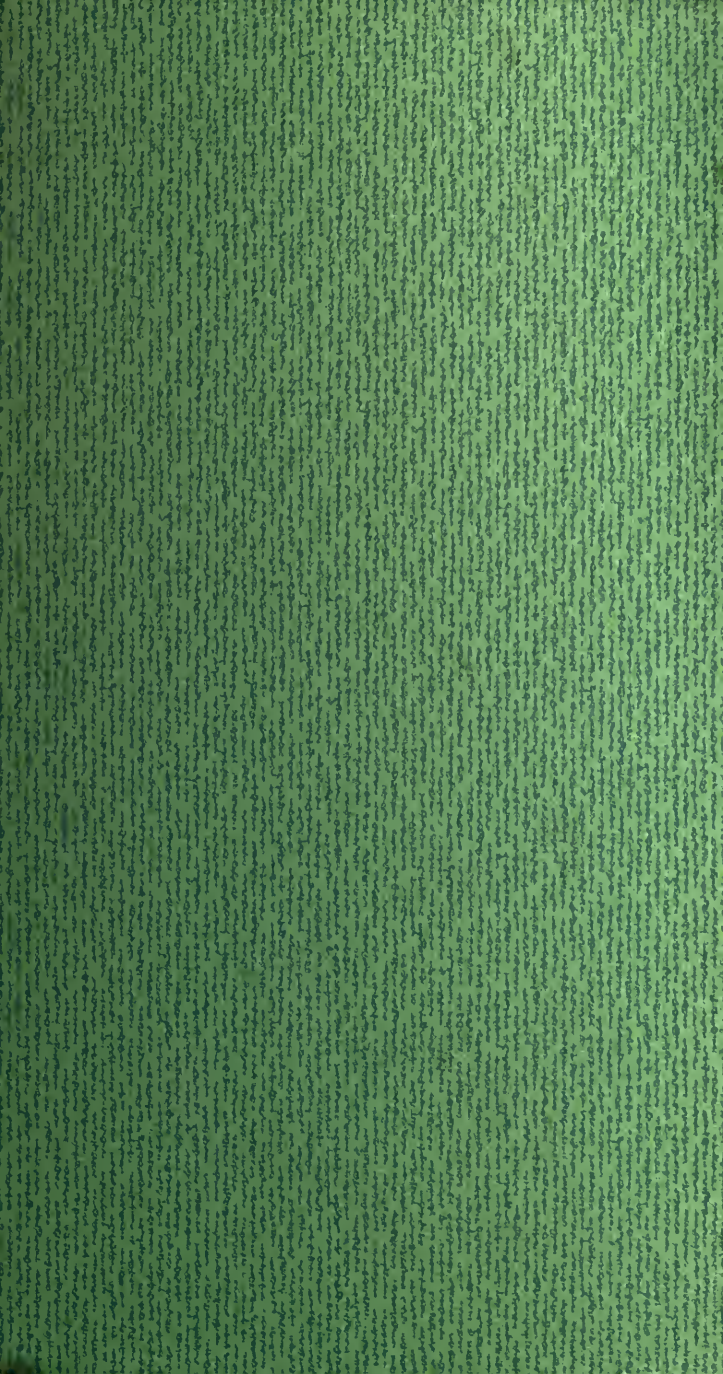






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JULIA HOWARD.

A ROMANCE.

BY

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IN THREE VOLUMES,

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JULIA HOWARD.

CHAPTER I.

They raised the bleeding Otho, and the leech
Forbad all present question, sign, or speech.

LARA.

AT six o'clock on the following morning Count O'Donnel entered his nephew's room. He found O'Connor asleep, and treading lightly, the old war-worn soldier approached the bed and gazed on the sleeper. As Allaster lay there in the unconscious grace of his sleeping attitude,

with the brown curls clustering over his forehead, and the long dark lashes of his closed lids almost touching his cheek, and a dreaming smile curving his lip, an expression of youthful and almost feminine gentleness sat on his face, and restored in all its vividness his likeness to his mother. This resemblance, during his waking hours, diminished, if not destroyed, by the premature gloom of early care, which lent to his countenance a cast of melancholy haughtiness, returned with the hushed repose and illusive happiness of slumber.

O'Donnel gazed long and steadfastly on the son of his only sister, the living likeness of his gentle Alice ; and as he gazed, an unwonted feeling of regretful tenderness stole through his stern breast, while the indifference with which he had engaged in the affair began to yield place to a dispiriting anxiety for the safety of the exile, who was to him as a son. But

he soon shook off these growing apprehensions, and lightly touching O'Connor's arm, called on him to wake.

“Get up, man, get up!” he exclaimed, assuming the stern levity of manner which had ever characterised him in the hour of danger. “It is time to open the ball; your partner will be waiting, and I have the flutes ready.”

O'Connor sprang up, and began to dress as quickly as he could. Not a trace of the rebel feelings which for a moment had unmanned the gallant old soldier were allowed to meet the observation of his nephew.

“How have you settled it, uncle?” asked O'Connor, as he hurriedly put on his clothes.

“I saw Vernon last night. They are to meet us in the Prater, behind the grove of oaks at the end of the allée. It seems

Stanley has sprained his arm, so you fight with pistols."

"The time?" asked O'Connor.

"Half-past seven. We must be there to the moment, not late, as it is your first affair; not too early, for it looks so damned fussy. Coolness is everything."

"I am just ready," said O'Connor. "Take that packet; it contains a letter to Father Eustace, and one to Herbert. I have filled a cheque for the money I have at Elkan's; you will draw it, and have it lodged for Grattan at the English bank which does Elkan's London business. I have told Father Grattan that I make him my heir. You will manage this matter for me. Write to him too. Poor old man!"

O'Donnel took the packet with a steady hand: but as he put it into his pocket, a knitting of his shaggy eyebrows, and a

twitching of his grizzled moustache, betrayed the feeling which shot through his iron frame. He opened the pistol-case, and after examining the weapons with a critical eye, he replaced them carefully in their receptacle.

“The tools are in capital order ; a child might do good work with such a pair of prime implements. Are you a good shot?”

“I can pick the aces out of a pack of cards, and cap the first bullet with the second ; but that is nothing to the purpose now. I do not want to shoot the man.”

“You’ll fire at him for all that,” said the General. “Make one rule now, and stick to it through life, and that is, never to go out with a man unless you intend to fire at him.”

“What sort of chap is Vernon?” said Allaster.

“He is a very pleasant fellow to meet on such business, although he has not had much experience. We toss up for the word. Make haste—that cravat will do very well.”

“I am ready,” said O’Connor. “You have been very kind to me since we met each other, and you stand by me now like a father. My life may not be a long one, but long or short, it will be full of gratitude and affection for you.”

He wrung the veteran’s hand in the strong grasp of manly affection.

“Hang you, Allaster, do not be croaking,” said the Count, while he thrust his hand into his stock as if it pressed on his throat.

O’Donnell’s drosky was at the door, and the old soldier-servant of the Count, Tim Dwyer, who had followed him from Athenry to Austria, and would follow him to the other world if it were necessary, stood at the door.

"Have breakfast ready in an hour," said O'Donnel, as he stepped into the drosky. "Give me the pistols, Tim."

"There they are, your honour," said Tim, reverently handing in the case; "with the blessing of the good Lord, I'll scratch another cross on the stock of them to-night. The O'Connors, from father to son, were red-handed, so there's no fear this boy would get a bog bed and a green quilt his first turn."

"Don't talk to me, Tim, I'm as nervous as a cat this morning; but once on the ground I shall be all right."

O'Connor, who had been putting on his cloak, now sprang down the steps and into the drosky. They drove rapidly towards the Prater. O'Connor thought of the uncertainty of his own fate, and of the change of the coming hour, but he would not allow a trace of his thoughts to appear on his proud brow. O'Donnel, on whom

rested the whole responsibility, felt more anxious by far than his nephew.

They left the drosky at the star of the allée, and walked on to the grove of trees which marked the spot chosen for the meeting. Stanley had not made his appearance. It was a beautiful morning : the red sunlight glittered on the dewy grass, and on the transparent crystalline green of the young foliage ; the distant heights were bathed in the sunny haze floating along their wooded slopes, and the reaches of the Danube, now hidden, now revealed among the wooded isles and winding shores, gleamed like the broken links of a silver chain. O'Connor paced the sward in deep thought, while his wandering fancy flew back to his distant home. On such mornings as this he had often met Julia Howard returning from her morning walk, herself fresh as the young day, and radiant as the April skies.

As he paced the glade, his eyes fell on a mossy bank beneath one of the trees ; a creeping honeysuckle twined up the oak, and at its gnarled roots, rising out of the ground, the pale silken moss was mingled with the fragile white blossoms of the wind flower, and the scentless blue violet of the woods. One day, one well-remembered day, Julia and he had sat on such a bank for a moment, and she had gathered those very flowers, and idly wreathed them together, while he had sought to speak of indifferent matters, but no words would come from his lips ; and then he had sat silent at her feet, smothering the sighs which heaved his full breast. And now he stood afar, beside the mighty Danube, awaiting the moment which should place his life on the hazard ; and that remembered hour of his youthful love appeared soft and bright to his soul, and

made him almost forget the stern purpose for which he was there.

The General meanwhile paced the ground impatiently, chafing and fuming at the tardiness of Stanley's movements. He looked along the road, then at his watch—the hour was past—and his ire was kindled.

“Confound the puppy,” he muttered; “confound his modish impertinence, that he cannot get up in time to fight while the place is quiet.”

“It is yet early,” said O'Connor; “had you not called me I should be asleep still.”

“Faith, you take it coolly,” said the General; and then, as he walked to the end of the allée, he muttered, “and so should I if that teufelsbraten Edward were in this boy's place. I wish it were done and over.”

The sight of a calèche, advancing as fast as the horses could step, cut short the ebullition of the General's wrath. He returned to O'Connor, and in a few minutes Stanley and Vernon, accompanied by a surgeon, made their appearance. O'Connor raised his hat and bowed; Stanley returned the salute with equal formality of courtesy.

"I fear we have made you wait, Count," said Vernon. "I came round by the Freyung to take up Rath Shroeder. They are first-rate shots, so it is as well to be prepared for the result."

The General responded with ceremonious amenity to Vernon's excuses, and they proceeded to work, while the surgeon, behind a tree, busied himself with a case full of sundry ill-favoured instruments.

"We will place them here, across this avenue," said the Count. "Vernon, mark the distance."

He dropped his glove on the spot, and Vernon told off the twelve paces, All preliminaries were disposed of, and their men were placed. O'Donnell was to give the word. As he drew back from Al-laster's side, he turned deadly pale, and compressed his mouth as if a spasm had convulsed his iron nerves.

"Allow me to give them the word," whispered Vernon, with a look of genuine good feeling."

"No, I must not be so womanly in my old age. I count three, and then you fire. One—two—three !"

The sharp report of the pistols almost covered his last word. O'Connor stood unhurt and unmoved ; Stanley staggered, and would have fallen, had not Vernon sprung forward to support him.

O'Connor stood for a moment, waiting lest Stanley should ask a second shot ; but when he saw him leaning on the arm

of his friend, he flung away the pistol which he had retained in his hold, and assisted his uncle and Vernon to place Stanley on a bank near the spot. The ball had fractured Stanley's arm at the elbow, and then lodged in his breast. It was a painful and dangerous wound, and the blood from the divided artery was spouting in jets over the hands of the surgeon. Feeling a strange sickening sort of anxiety, O'Connor knelt beside the wounded man, who was fast losing all consciousness of surrounding objects, although he recognised O'Connor, and feebly raised his left hand to his grasp.

O'Connor pressed the offered hand with a sensation of bitter self-reproach, as he remembered the heedless trifling by which he had roused the jealousy of Stanley's slighted love. The surgeon dressed the wound as well as circumstances admitted, and then he relieved O'Connor's anxiety

by announcing that there was no imminent danger of a fatal result, and that even amputation might not be necessary.

“Thank Heaven!” muttered O’Connor, as he rose from the ground where he had knelt, supporting Stanley’s head during the operations of the Rath.

“Well, Tim, I have brought him home safe, wind and limb,” said the General, as he sat down to his breakfast; “and he is worth caring for too, let me tell you. Game to the backbone! Give me the cutlets, Tim, and the mulled ale.”

“It is kind, father, for him to be game,” said Tim. “But as the English chap—I disremember the queer names that is on them always—is not dead, I need not make the cross on my little beauties this time.”

“I wonder how any man can be a fire-eater,” said Allaster. “I would not willingly endure again what I suffered while the surgeon was tying that artery, when

I saw all the muscles of Stanley's arm contracting with pain, though he was fainting."

"Myself is as well pleased you did not kill him," said Tim; "for as you will surely be red-handed like all your people, you will be safe in the next duel you fight."

"I will go to see Stanley after breakfast," said O'Connor, as he poured out his chocolate.

"You are right," said the General. "You behaved right well: so cool first, and then so kind to the poor fellow. I hope he will rub through without amputation, for I find the loss of an arm to be very inconvenient."

"Arrah, General, don't even the likes of him to yourself," growled Tim Dwyer; "sure what matter would it be if twenty English puppies kicked the bucket! 'Twas

them brought the hunger and the sorrow into Ireland."

"There is no use in arguing with Tim," said O'Donnel. "He would answer the priest in his vestments, let alone a poor boccha sinner like me."

The General proceeded to the palace to attend a council summoned by the Duke of Lorraine. Allaster went to the embassy to see Stanley.

Some days passed, and Stanley's wound was disposed to heal; the fever was slight for the extent of the injury, and Stanley had a sound strong constitution. Rath Schroeder talked of the first intention, and promised a prompt convalescence. O'Connor and Stanley became more intimate, during a few days of suffering on one side and patient kindness on the other, than they might have become during months of the ceremonious inter-

course which had characterised the beginning of their acquaintance.

Stanley's manner, when the world was going well with him, was marked and marred by that superficial appearance of haughtiness, which is as often the result of apathy as of pride. With youth, fortune, and good position in society, he had lived fast, and had tried every pleasure, and had consequently reached the end of all such things, the listlessness of satiety. With such a man O'Connor might have spent years without falling into the slightest degree of intimacy. In the solitude of the chamber of pain it was different. The acquired polish and supercilious coldness of manner disappeared before the humbling touch of sickness; and Stanley, in a strange land, without a friend to watch over his restless couch, and dependent on menials for the tendance on which his life depended, was grateful for the unwearied kindness and

attention of O'Connor. And in his turn Allaster was not a little surprised to find that many of his preconceived notions were rather too hastily taken up ; and to learn that Stanley, notwithstanding his foppery and affectation, possessed many good and even noble qualities. His character was alloyed with selfishness, and enervated by the jaded languor which follows the unlimited indulgence of dissipated passions ; but when any event occurred which had power to break through the hard crust of acquired habits, the latent spring of native good feeling was to be found full below. He was fearless as an English bulldog, which I take it is the bravest thing in nature ; laborious when toil was necessary, though indolent and voluptuous in times of ease ; true to his friends, and capable of frankly and freely forgetting an injury, although he could not forgive an unpunished insult. O'Connor soon became

acquainted with this complex character ; and in the reaction of a generous spirit, when he was persuaded of the injustice of his former prejudices, he sought eagerly to atone for having ever entertained them. He was untiring in his care of his wounded friend, whom he soon liked as sincerely and cordially as he had once disliked him.

The term of O'Connor's leave was fast approaching. He was already well accepted in the world of Vienna, and at last his presence at a court ball assured him a fixed position even in the most exclusive set. Francis of Lorraine, desirous of showing due consideration to the gallant veteran O'Donnel, presented Allaster to the Queen, who spoke to him with that graceful condescension for which she was remarkable among all the sovereigns of Europe. Her blooming youth, her beauty, her proud queenly grace, the noble interest thrown

around her by the hazardous position of her affairs, and by the dauntless resolution with which she fronted every danger in a spirit worthy of the blood of Hapsburg, and the softer interest which she derived from her happy and simple domestic life with the husband of her choice,—all these conspired to excite the chivalrous devotion of her subjects.

O'Connor felt his admiration for the woman mingling with his loyalty to the Queen, and he listened with a bounding heart and a flushing cheek to the few words with which she honoured him. To him, the descendant of the rude immemorial royalty of the Celtic race, to him whose spirit, irritated by early misfortune mingled the pride of the stoic with the scorn of the cynic, the notice of a king would have been rather repugnant than flattering; he would have despised himself had he become a bland, bowing, smiling

courtier. But when the sovereign he had chosen was a woman, he felt honoured even by the service he offered her ; he felt that a smile of Maria Theresa would be a rich guerdon for the noblest deeds of devotion, and he cherished the remembrance of her few short words, to be at once an omen and a stimulus in his future career of soldierly adventure.

Among those of his acquaintances present at the ball, he found himself at once somewhat more highly considered ; the flattering notice of the Queen, and his uncle's favour with the Duke, raised him from the uncertain rank of a mere unknown soldier of fortune, and gave him a position which he very well knew how to estimate. The kindness and ready sympathy, which peculiarly belong to the German character, manifested themselves in the unfeigned hearty pleasure with which

his friends observed the distinction conferred on him.

As brighter prospects opened to his view, the depressing weight of hopeless poverty passed from his spirit. The morose pride with which he had nerved himself to bear the ruin of his fortune, and the sullen reserve in which he had wrapped himself lest he should appear to court the favour of the world, yielded to the exhilarating influence of hope. The power of enjoyment returned—the ardent spirit of his boyhood came back upon him—the deep spring sparkled, as it were, into light and life from its dissolving fetters of ice. His mind woke from its torpor—his highly cultivated intellectual nature resumed its healthful active existence. Forgetful of self—never seeking display—never dwelling too long on any topic, he showed the keen sense of the ridiculous, and the frolic

humour which so eminently characterise his countrymen, whose gaiety is allied to the deepest feeling, and whose wit is blended with poetry. He abandoned himself to the pleasures of society with that thorough honest open enjoyment, which interested every one in his favour, at the same time preserving his quiet manner, and that perfect repose without which even talent becomes intolerable in society. Lord Deepdene was highly pleased with his *debutant* : had O'Connor failed in the ordeal, Lord Deepdene would have liked him less, although he would not have the less tried to serve him. With all the Earl's good qualities, and sterling, generous feelings, there were yet a few unacknowledged prejudices mingled. He had been too long accustomed to the hothouse atmosphere of good society ; he had contracted something too much of deference to its arbitrary laws, and had learned to value its

factitious polish somewhat too highly. But, luckily, Allaster did succeed, and Lord Deepdene's pride was flattered by his favourite's success, and he smiled complacently when Countess Bathyany said that O'Connor was a "*Trouvaille charmante*."

"Where have you spent your morning?" inquired Lord Deepdene on the following day, as O'Connor entered the dining-room with an apology for his tardy appearance.

"In six horse-dealers' yards," said O'Connor; "I can get nothing to suit me. Those Turks are all fine showy animals, but with legs which I don't like, though perhaps if they were not so barbarously shod they might be better."

"Just before you came over," said O'Donnel, who also dined with Lord Deepdene, "I bought a horse from Count Groödy,—a dappled, tawny, tan-coloured thing, which will make a splendid charger.

I'll give him to you, and, moreover, of my bounty I will also give you a groom of my own rearing, Fritz Dwyer, the boldest rider in Austria."

"What an hybrid appellation the youth rejoices in," said Lord Deepdene.

"And he himself is a half-bred thing. His father followed me from Galway, and was more a friend than a servant to me; his mother was my girl's nurse. So, Allaster, you will have your tail on, like an Irish chief, when you get this fosterer."

"You will want three horses," said Lord Deepdene, "so I have no scruple of conscience in asking you to take my Sicilian off my hands. She was a gift, so I cannot sell her, and the trouble, expense, and risk of taking her back to England make me wish to quarter her on one of my friends here. Will you take her, O'Connor?"

“ I will take her with thanks,” said O’Connor ; “ I only fear I ought not to accept so valuable a gift. Your groom told me that you refuse a hundred guineas for her.”

“ I could not sell her,” said Lord Deepdene ; “ but I could have got that price for her from the Duke of Cumberland, who wished to put her into his stud.”

After dinner, Allaster visited Stanley, whom he found in high spirits ; Rath Schroeder having pronounced that the fracture was knitting, and having promised that the arm would be as strong and flexible as ever. Cheered by this bulletin, Allaster proceeded with a light heart to take possession of his Sicilian mare, accompanied by O’Donnel, whom he dragged off to admire his acquisition.

“ Now, then,” said O’Donnel, “ your outfit is provided, Stanley is all right

again, and you have got some days of your leave. What do you mean to do with yourself?"

"Whatever you please, uncle ; I think I ought to join at once."

"There's nothing stirring down there yet," said O'Donnel. "I am thinking of leaving town to-morrow ; I must go home to sow my oats and look after my lambs. Will you leave this gay town, and go down to Durrenstein with me?"

"Where you go, I go," said O'Connor.

"Then to-morrow we start for home. It is your home now, Allaster. I long to see my girls. They are all that remain to me of my happiness ; but I am wrong in saying this, my boy," he added, as he felt the affectionate pressure of Allaster's hand on his arm ; "I am wrong, for you will be a son to my old age."

"A son to you and a brother to my cousins. I am most impatiently curious

to see them. Tim Dwyer tells me that Alma is an angel, and the other the merriest little imp in Germany."

"Aye, so they are. You will like them, Allaster; and it will be a comfort to me to know that they have a friend and a brother near them when I am gone."

They reached the stables where Lord Deepdene's horses stood, and the mare was brought out and stripped of her clothes. She was a brown bay, much clouded with black shades on her quarters. She was from the stud of the king, kept up in Apulia, by crossing the Arab blood with the old Calabrian race celebrated since the days of the Romans, and still retaining the same qualities for which it was valued by the patricians. All the best points of both sire and dam were united in the form of this mare. The long muscular arm, the short strong leg, flat and broad below the knee, the crest more

arching and full than is common among mares, belonged to the Italian,—the fine shoulder, the deep chest, the small head, with the broad forehead and tapering muzzle,—the large staglike eyes, and rather too long ears, belonged to the high blood of the desert. Her qualities matched with her points ; she had the speed of the east, and the strength of the west.

“ Is she not a beauty, uncle ? ” exclaimed O’Connor, as he sprang on her back.

She plunged furiously, but finding she could not unseat him, she trotted quietly through the streets, only testifying her impatience by the oblique glance of her eyes and an occasional toss of her head, while her ears were laid back on her neck, and her nostrils opened and shut with her hot breath. Reaching the Prater, O’Connor gave her the rein and touched her flank with the spur.

Wild neighed the untamed mare, as gradually quickening her pace she burst away in her bounding gallop, every swelling vein and each elastic and spring-like sinew strung for the aimless race. She chafed against the bit which O'Connor made her feel to rouse her mettle; the foam gathered on her mouth and flaked her broad breast, but not a drop of sweat stained her dappled side, and not a panting sob escaped from her deep distending chest.

O'Connor's spirit rose sympathetic with the fiery ardour of the gallant mare. Care, suspense, poverty, were swept from his mind. Welcomed, not disdained by the world, supported by staunch friends, honoured by the notice of the daughter of the old imperial line, he was no longer the hopeless and obscure exile. Received by the veteran Count O'Donnel with the affection of a father for a long absent son, he

had found a home, when he was re-united to the busy world of domestic life by the ties of kindred and the thousand small strong links of household charities. The intoxication of fresh springing hope, of soldierly ambition, of vague glorious aspirations after immortal honour and boundless enjoyment, gained a growing empire over his spirit, once again buoyant as in his earliest years. The dream of his boyhood was about to be realized by the opening career of his manhood. He stood on the threshold of the arena ready to engage in the struggle for fame, power, and wealth. He was about to take his part in the momentous business of life, and already he felt himself ennobled by his anticipated share in the dangers and triumphs of his adopted country. In the thick-coming visions of the hurrying future, the excitement of peril, the racy stir of adventure, the allurements of every pleasure that

might woo the senses, the flattery of the world, seemed but to wait on his command. He thought of Maria Theresa's royal smile, and his heart beat high with chivalrous pride ; he thought of his successes in society, and his cheek flushed with the glow of an almost boyish satisfaction. He exulted in the rich gifts with which nature had dowered him ; his fearless, ardent spirit, his powerful mind instinct with the sacred fire of poetry, and even the proud beauty of his blooming manhood ; he felt all his worth, and he revelled in the consciousness of such an existence. False shame, and a false, weak philosophy, conceal and condemn those feelings which nature implants in every richly-organized being ; and even of themselves they are but for a day, their bright effervescence soon vanishes, but while they last, no other pleasure can exceed the deep joy of that triumphant sense of life and power within us.

“ On, Sissy, on !” he cried, slapping his hand on the crest of the mare, and with a snort and a bound she dashed forward and gained the brow of an eminence overlooking the broad currents of the mighty river. O’Connor dismounted, and stroking the wavy tresses of her silky sable mane, he allowed her to breathe from her exertions, while he gazed on the rushing waters of the Danube, and muttered half aloud in his reverie :

“ Like that river be my life ! It is come from its obscure source among the far-off hills of the Black Forest,—it has passed from the narrow gorge and dark ravine,—it has swept over the treacherous shoal,—it has burst from the circling whirlpool,—and now the deep majestic current rolls on its way, unbroken and calm in its resistless strength. Julia, thou shalt yet be mine ! I feel it—I know it ; thou art part of my being, and I am thine !

and well have I kept the vow I swore to thee !”

The pawing of his restless mare roused him from his waking dream. He mounted, and rode slowly homewards.

CHAPTER II.

Soft, as the memory of buried love ;
Pure, as the prayer that childhood wafts above,
Was she, the daughter of that rude old chief,
Who met the maid with tears, but not of grief.

/ THE BRIDE OF ABYDOS.

ON the following day, Count O'Donnel and his nephew set out for Durrenstein. For some hours they travelled through the richly cultivated plains which extend, broad, and green, and teeming with homely luxuriance along the shores of the Danube. Everywhere the peasants were at work in the fields ; the ploughman whistled as his patient.

team turned the brown fallow, the boatman sang as his barge was towed against the current by the slow oxen, and the wild, shrill shout of the raftsmen rose on the air as the masses of timber drifted down between the willow-clad islands of the broad Danube.

It was evening when they passed through the old town of Stein, and entered the mountain gorge of the Danube. The scene changed at once. The hills rose precipitously from the water's edge, their sides clothed with pine-forest, and their lower spurs crowned by palace convents, while their rocky peaks were crested by the crumbling ruins of feudal strongholds. White villages clung to the sides of the valleys winding between the hills, their orchards white with the lavish abundance of blossom fringing the sombre woods. Below the river, now spread like a mountain lake without any apparent outlet, now

rushing onwards in the wild velocity of its dark smooth current, and now again foamed white over rock and reef with a roar like thunder, as it swept along the narrowing ravine. Among the ruined castles, there was one lonely tower, seated like an eagle's eyrie on the brow of a rocky pinnacle, which O'Donnel pointed out, with more than common interest, to his companion.

"That is the Alt Schloss of Durrenstein, the prison of Cœur de Lion."

O'Connor looked on the shattered ruins, and felt that, despite the lapse of consuming Time, there is yet a magic in the legendary tale of feudal greatness, and that an interest still attaches to the deeds and the sufferings of the royal troubadour, the crusader king, whose name stands highest on the blazoned roll of chivalry.

"Let philosophers cavil as they will, and plodding historians write as they list!"

he exclaimed ; “ let them drag into searching light the abuses of feudalism, and assert that the courage and gallantry of the age of chivalry were stained throughout with ferocity and licentiousness ; let them do their worst, still our hearts will beat high with responsive ardour when we read the traditionary story of knightly prowess.”

“ Yet we were less remote from the age of chivalry,” said O’Donnel, “ you would be forced to see how many and crying abuses it engendered. Even the remnant of the feudal system yet subsisting in the jurisprudence of this country is a fruitful germ of evil. It causes a radical antagonism between the different classes of society ; the nobles have a right to be oppressors ; the peasants have just cause to be disaffected.”

“ It may be true,” said O’Connor. “ I seek not to revive the tameless spirit of

the world's fresh youth in those toil-burdened days of the world's old age. I know that the fiat is gone forth, and that the change is wrought. The thoughts, deeds, feelings, and laws of the middle ages are passed away beyond recal; but yet, amid the material progress of civilization, and the positive interests of our social life, something is wanting to the yearning enthusiasm which lives, even when unacknowledged, in the breast of every man whose nature possesses a want and a capacity of enjoyment beyond the range and reach of mere animal gratifications."

"You ought to have been born a German, Allaster," observed Count O'Donnel, with a smile. "I once heard a mad poet, a pet of Countess Bathyany, say that every man of talent and education—bildung, as they call it—lives in two worlds, the real world and the ideal world, and that all his noblest impulses belong to the lat-

ter. I thought him a fool; for if his doctrine were true, God help us; no great man could be a gallant soldier nor a happy husband."

"He carried the thing too far," said Allaster. "The noblest impulses all arise out of the stern and holy duties of real active life—the life of a man in his home and his country where he lives, toils, suffers, and dies, for and with what he loves or what he reveres. But the refinement and exquisite grace of the poet or the artist are created by those hours of brooding reverie when we surrender ourselves to the romance of chivalry, the sorcery of Eastern lore, or the treasures of classic poetry ever glowing in their eternal youthful freshness, like the sea waves, unnumbered smiles, which time has had no power to change."

Count O'Donnel did not answer, and probably did not listen to O'Connor's

rhapsody of enthusiasm. The carriage was rattling over the stony street of the little village of Loiben, and the Count, with his head out of the window, was returning the hearty and respectful greetings of the peasants, just then coming home from their work.

“There’s the Wunderberg, that high hill to the right,” said O’Donnel, as getting clear of the straggling village the road turned sharply round the base of Durrenstein, and entered a narrow valley, where a stream, sparkling in the rosy twilight, leaped from rock to rock with a joyous murmur, where old oaks and chestnuts cast their broad shadows over the small space of pasture bounding the stream on either hand, and where the weeping birch waved its graceful pendulous branches among the rocks, which led the eye upwards from the sylvan valley towards the pine-clad cliffs of the wizard

Wunderberg. Beside the stream stood a long low house, built of grey stone; the projecting roof was supported by rudely-carved corbels beneath the eaves; along the front ran a range of windows, in which florid oriels alternated with narrow gothic lattices, a deep-arched gateway, surmounted by the arms of O'Donnel, occupied the centre of the front, and permitted O'Connor to discover beyond a court, adorned by the statues and conchshells of an old-fashioned fountain. The whole house was thickly mantled by the luxuriant festoons of the wild vine. A garden sloped down to the stream, an orchard in full bloom sloped upwards to the base of the Wunderberg.

The carriage turned into the archway, where, on either side, Allaster saw a flight of broad stone stairs. As the General got out, a girl came bounding down stairs, and, clasping her arms round his neck,

kissed him again and again, while he strained her to his breast with his one arm, and kissed her with fond tenderness.

“Ich habe dich wieder! I have you once more!” exclaimed the girl in her delight; and then, still clinging to the old man’s arm, she held out her hand to Tim Dwyer.

“Nurse will be in the kitchen, Fraulein,” said Tim, as he shook hands with his foster-daughter, and then went in search of his wife. Meanwhile all the servants gathered round the master.

“Kuss die hand!” said the men, doffing their caps and bowing, as the Count nodded to them a kindly greeting.

“Kuss die hand!” lisped the pretty rosy maid-servants; but they suited the action to the word, and did kiss the veteran’s hand, while the old soldier stroked the hair of one and patted the round

cheek of another, as if they were his own children.

“Gut gefahrt, gut bigalht, Gnadiges Frau-lein,” said the postilion, as he tied up the rope traces, and let his sagacious nags make their own way to the pump and the stables.

“Do give him a double trinkgeld, Tim,” said the young Countess to her foster-father, who made his reappearance with his wife; “every one must be happy here to-day, as I have my father once more. Dear, naughty father, why did you stay so long in Vienna? I was so lonely;” and she drew him up-stairs, saying, “Come now, I want to hear of my Irish cousin; is he handsome? shall we love him? can he speak German?”

“Let him answer for himself; I’ll parade him for inspection. Here—Allaster—where have you earthed yourself?”

Allaster had kept himself in the back

ground, and unnoticed by any one, watched this little German home scene with amused curiosity. When his uncle called him, he sprang up-stairs, and joined the father and daughter on the landing-place. Alma received him with a timid eagerness of welcome ; very shy and very affectionate, she tried to show her joy at meeting her cousin ; but he was so young and handsome, that she could not treat him with the frank open kindness she had intended to lavish on him, when, before he came, she and her sister had been planning the meeting. She could not make a brother of him. She gave him her hand, and he was just raising it to his lips, when the General threw the young girl into his arms.

“Was zum henker ails the boy and girl ?” he said, laughing ; “Mein Herr so polite and my lady Countess so gracious ! Kiss her, man ; kiss her !”

Making a virtue of necessity, Allaster pressed his lips to those of Alma O'Donnel ; apparently it was a pleasing virtue and a sweet necessity, for a second slight pressure of his lip stole a second kiss from the blushing girl ere he released her from his embrace. Alma O'Donnel was very pretty. Tall and slight, her figure possessed a drooping grace which claimed the tenderness of all who knew her, indicating as it did but too truly the frail delicacy of her health and the sweet gentle lovingness of her disposition. Her face was round, and her features not strictly regular ; but her forehead was high and smooth, her complexion exquisitely clear and fresh as the flower of the peach ; her large blue eyes shone with a liquid lustre, and rivalled the azure of the April sky ; her coral lips, often parted by a half smile, and never closely shut, showed teeth small, even, and white as pearls. Her hair of a golden

auburn, fell in clustering curls round her face, but its length and thickness were such, that enough remained to form two massive and burnished plaits, which were wound round her head, and secured at the back by a golden arrow. She wore the old German costume—a tight boddice of crimson velvet, a black apron, and a white petticoat, short enough to show a beautiful foot and ankle. A black velvet ribbon encircled her neck and supported a diamond cross.

They all entered the stube. O'Connor glanced round with the half awakened curiosity of a man entering for the first time the house which is to become his home. The room, large and lofty as German rooms generally are, bore witness to the tastes and habits of the family. The furniture was of carved oak, polished and darkly tinted by age; little Turkish carpets covered the corners of the room,

leaving the middle bare. The stove was an edifice of blue and white tiles, surmounted by a group of shepherds and shepherdesses with flower-baskets, dogs and sheep, all in bright-coloured Dutch china. On one side of this quaint fireplace a bracket supported a lamp, near which, on a little shelf, was displayed a goodly range of pipes, Turkish and German, meerschaum and china, all silver and amber mounted, and dainty smoke-stained clays, not mounted at all, and none the worse for that. Beneath the lamp and within reach of the pipes, a large arm-chair marked the General's usual place. On the other side of the stove, a similar bracket and lamp, a cane chair, a small spinning-wheel, and a basket of flax marked the Countess Alma's favourite place. A few pictures—battle-pieces and hunting scenes—some arms, ancient and modern, in beautiful order—some military

maps and plans, were arranged on the wainscoated walls. Files of newspapers, an embroidery frame with a piece of tapestry in progress, a harpsichord and guitar, a pile of music, and a couple of cabinets, filled, as Allaster afterwards discovered, with some well-chosen standard books in English and German, completed the furniture of the room, and perfected the silent history of the daily life of the inmates of the Schloss. Among the pictures was one portrait, that of a young woman; from its likeness to Alma, O'Connor guessed that it was the picture of her mother.

“Welcome to your home, Allaster,” said Count O'Donnel. As he turned to speak to his nephew, he saw him gazing on the picture. The veteran's own eyes, too, rested on the fair face pictured there; the last rays of the setting sun rested on it, and cast a soft halo round it; and the

deep clear eyes and gentle smile which the painter had caught and fixed on the canvass, seemed to meet and reply with mute eloquence to the long gaze of the old man. He turned away, and opening the door of the stove, sat down, and looked into the cheerful flames. Alma wound her arm round his neck, and laid her rosy cheek upon his head, where the grey hair was already thinned by time. "I still have thee to cheer my old age, gold kind-chen!" said the General, fondly playing with the small hand which rested on his breast. "Where is Friederike?"

Before Alma could answer, the report of a rifle rang through the room; it was followed by the sharp yelping of dogs, and the clear ringing tones of a female voice speaking loud and quick. The door flew open, and a girl and two setters came bounding into the room. The girl flung a rifle on a sofa as she passed, and sprang to

the General's breast ; the dogs jumped and fawned on him, barking and whining as if jealous of his caresses, while he kissed their mistress again and again.

By the darkening twilight, aided by the quivering light of the wood fire, O'Connor could see that his young cousin was a pretty creature of sixteen, short, round, plump, and merry, with an olive skin, a rich red cheek, bright black eyes, and dark curly hair, Irish every inch. His heart warmed to her at once. Her Hungarian pelisse and fur cap became her exceedingly, and heightened the originality of her appearance.

"Down, Riekchen—down, Flora—get away, Caspar," said the General, addressing the same exhortation to the girl and her canine friends ; "down all of you, you imps, and let me be quiet—will you ?"

"Bow wow, alter vater ; don't be cross," said Friederike, again putting the tips of

her fingers on the General's shoulder, and jumping up to snatch another kiss.

"Rika bitte, speak to our cousin," said Alma. "She is not quite mad," she added, turning her soft friendly glance on Allaster, while she drew her sister towards him.

Friederike looked at O'Connor with frank fearless curiosity, and then held out her two hands to him.

"I think I shall love you," she said. "You see, Alma, he is just like what I described him to you last night; your description is not a bit like him." Then turning again to O'Connor, she went on, "If I cannot love you I shall hate you, for I cannot bear to be disappointed; and we settled that we were all to become great friends."

"Oh, I think we shall get on very well together, when my native shyness is worn away," replied O'Connor, laughing. "You

must tell me what were the respective portraits you both drew of poor insignificant me."

"Liebe Rika!" pleaded Alma, blushing to her temples.

"Oh, I tell no tales, little sister; do not be afraid," and Rika ran off to dress for supper, followed by her dogs.

"Now shall we have peace," said O'Donnel. "It is a good child, Allaster, but she will plague you to death if you chance to like quiet."

The evening passed on. The little bustle of the Count's arrival subsided. Supper was served, and O'Connor found himself at home. He was received with no niggardly affection; no chilling reserve indicated how lately he had been thrown into their little circle. He was gay and happy. The General and the two girls were resolutely cheerful; but as the evening passed away, many a melancholy re-

membrance was crushed down into their hearts. It was the first time that the old man had returned to his fireside, without the welcome of his wife ; it was the first time that the girls had laid aside their mourning ; and both he and they felt that the last link was broken, and the last trace of her they had loved was swept away from their home for ever. Had O'Connor known this, he would have shared in their suppressed sorrow, for he too had but a few days before taken off his mourning to put on his uniform, and in doing so he felt as if he but then really closed his father's grave for ever.

CHAPTER III.

Perish the man whose mind is backward now.

SHAKSPEARE.

O'CONNOR could only give three days to Durrenstein, but within that space of time he contrived to make himself a favourite with every one. He came, saw, and conquered, as he boasted with a comical affectation of puppyism. He read and walked with Alma, quizzed her broken English, which she lisped with the sweetest accent that ever lent silvery music to the language, and got quizzed in turn for his German, to which his habit of thinking in

Irish gave a strange sort of originality which made common thoughts seem new and amusing to his cousins. Hovering between unconscious flirtation and true brotherly affection, he loitered away the evenings with Alma, seated on the grass in the garden, while the General smoked his pipe, and looked complacently on the young pair, whenever he could take his eyes away from the beatific contemplation of the smoke wreathing its white curls round the turbaned Turk's head of his meerschäum.

The pretty Friederike delighted in her cousin, whom she alternately teased and petted to her heart's content. He won Frau Dwyer's kind motherly heart, by allowing the good old soul to take care of him, and surround him with sundry comforts and luxuries which he inwardly detested; as to Tim Dwyer, he had long since crept into the old soldier's good

graces by listening to divers long yarns of the Italian campaigns, and by answering a roll-call of questions touching the men and things pertaining to the town of Galway. In short, the whole duty of man, and of woman too, in the schloss, seemed to consist in devising pleasure for the young soldier, so that to please every one he had only to appear pleased, and he joyfully vouchsafed them thus much in recompense of their pains.

The pretty sisters begged another day, "just one day longer," when O'Connor fixed his departure for the next day. His presence had indeed produced a great change in the old secluded schloss; and his high spirit and active youthful nature had given to everything he did and said a racy zest which taught the two girls that life was something more enjoyable than they had hitherto found it. The prospect of his absence made them look on their

return to their quiet home-life with dread. Life without their handsome cousin seemed so dull and colourless to their fancy. The contending parties appealed to the General. Alma and Friederike pleaded that one little day could make no difference. O'Connor said that he wanted to spare his horses on the journey. The General decided against the rosy suppliants. In the morning all was ready for Allaster's departure. O'Donnel gave him letters to some of his veteran friends, men grown grey in the service, and high in rank as in honour. Alma gave him a pocket-book worked by her own fairy fingers, and filled by the General with something more valuable than the usual contents of such receptacles in the possession of cornets, who are commonly better provided with love-letters than with letters of credit.

"No thanks, man," he said; "get on your horse, and pocket your gratitude and

your money. I have more money than I know how to spend on myself and my two little hussies, so I may treat myself to the luxury of making you a son for my old age. Eh, Allaster ?”

“ If you want a son, alter vater,” cried Friederike, “ call me Fritz, and I shall be a very good boy. I can skate, swim, and shoot, and ride ; and what more could your heart desire ?”

“ You impudent baggage, I wish you were a boy, for then I could thrash you when you over-ride the horses, and bag the covey before any one else can get a shot at them ; but now I can make nothing of you. You do your worst at mischief, and then you come about me and coax me with your girlish way, and I cannot find it in my heart to scold you.”

The horses were at the door, and Frau Dwyer was taking leave of her son, and inculcating with equal emphasis the duty

of confessing once a month, and of getting aired beds for himself and his master at the Moravian inns, where such minutia of comfort are not much heeded by the hosts.

“Heaven bless your head, woman,” said Tim Dwyer; “’tis little time they’ll have for confessions and stations. Father Tavier will have to clear off the old scores when they come back.”

“And as to damp beds, Dora,” said Count O’Donnel, “they may find them useful as a preparatory step to the wet ground.”

“Come back a colonel, or never come back,” said Riekchen, pointing to the wall where her rifle hung from the antlers of a stag.

“You threaten, do you,” said Allaster, laughing. “You know our bargain; every time you bully me I kiss you, so here goes,” and he caught her in his arms, and

exacted the penalty with enormous usury too.

“Take care of yourself, Allaster,” whispered Alma; “do not rush into heedless dangers.”

“Are you a soldier’s daughter?” said the Count; “a soldier’s daughter, and a coward for your cousin?”

“Let him only resemble my father,” replied Alma, looking proudly up to the gallant veteran; “too brave for foolhardiness, too calm for rashness; I ask no more from him.”

“They are better off than we were, Tim,” said the General. “We were poor as mice when we joined Taaffe’s cuirassiers.”

“True for you, Herr Graf,” said Tim Dwyer; “I mind your honour gave the last florin you had for our dinner on the day we joined at Covalho.”

“ Beginning better, I hope we may end as well,” said O’Connor.

He sprang into the saddle, waved his hand once more in parting salutation ; the spur just touched the flank of his Hungarian charger, and with a bound and a snort the horse dashed out of the court.

“ Kuss die hande du Herrschaft,” cried Fritz, as he mounted the Sicilian, and followed his master, evidently delighted with himself, his mare, his master, and the whole world, and all things therein.

“ They are good boys too,” said the General. “ I am proud of that handsome high-spirited boy ; I see my own youth again in him, and my sister’s bright look is on his face.”

Alma gazed sadly after the travellers, and poor Frau Dwyer began to cry as she followed with her eyes the figure of her son. Old Tim twisted his grey moustache, and smiled grimly on his wife.

“Weibchen geh und hute deine ganschen,” he said, “don’t be crying and crurying about the gossoon ; sure it is only right that he should see service and follow the young master. It will make a man of him out of hand, forby having him going to the bad here in idleness.”

Fritz followed his master soberly enough while in his mother’s sight ; but when he had gained the cover of the first grove of oaks, a cheer of delight burst from his lips, he flung up his cap into the air, caught it again, and cantered the bounding Sicilian, while he sang an old song of his father’s.

Hurrah, hurrah, for freedom and the field,

We are off to the wars again !

The drum’s deep roll, and the bugle’s wild note,

Call brave lads to the battle plain.

“ A good song, and well sung,” said Allaster ; “ but do not canter that mare

like a Galway groom. The trot is your pace."

"Sure 'tis myself is a Galway groom," replied Fritz; "my father was bred and born in Oranmore."

O'Connor laughed, but the accents of his native tongue, and the names of the well-known places, fell with a strange music-like words of blessing on his ear in that distant land.

"You speak Irish well," said O'Connor; "should you like to see old Ireland, Fritz?"

"Oh of all things, gnadiger herr. My old father tells me it is like heaven—fun and frolic all the year round. This is what he says when he has a sup taken, and is a weeshy bit disguised in liquor; but when he is fasting from the yellow bottle, he shakes his head, and says this country is near hand as good a place to live in."

"The girls are very pretty here," observed O'Connor, as he turned, and resting his hand on his horse's croup, looked after a rosy girl, who, with her scythe against her shoulder, and a truss of dewy clover on her head, tripped by, wishing him a gay good morrow in return for his bow.

"So they are, your honour; but they work so hard, reaping, cutting firewood, and driving the cow-carts, that the prettiest of them are old and ugly as Blocksberg witches at twenty-five. Oh, I should like to go to Ireland, where the girls have nothing to do but to milk the cow, and dance with the boys that are courting them under the linden trees on the green."

O'Connor began to whistle the tune of Cailiu dhas Crutheen-a-oo, and smiled at the picture of Irish peasant life which juggling fancy painted on the imagination of the German boy. Poor Fritz thought

that love and fun were the life's business of the Irish peasant ; little knew he that fun and love are there linked with extremest misery. The wild frolic humour of the Irish peasant is but the reckless and wilful mirth of despair, that seeks to stun its sickening consciousness of suffering ; and love, the only enjoyment left to the poor, instead of fluttering in the bright beams of pleasure, hides itself in the hovel, and but nerves the man and the woman to live on in their sorrow ; it sends the man forth fasting to earn the scanty meal of the evening, which the pale wife prepares and shares with him and her children, trying to satisfy the hunger of the young brood, and to steal something from her own share to add it to the portion of her husband, lest he should not have strength to toil on the following day for himself and those bound to him by the

strong galling links of misery, like as Laocoon and his sons are bound together in the crushing grasp of the serpent.

For several days their road lay athwart the fertile but dreary plains of Bohemia and Moravia. The rich soil, just covered by the young corn, spread away for leagues on every side. Not a hill, not a knoll, broke the wide level of the plain, or cheered the traveller with the deceptive hope that when he had gained its summit another scene would greet his sight. Scarce a tree varied the low line of the horizon, or cast a shadow on the earth, where the only change which enlivened the face of nature was that momentarily produced by the sunshine and the cloud shadows flitting along the plain. Fritz's company was quite a source of pleasure to O'Connor, who allowed him to talk as much and as familiarly as he pleased. The unalterable good-humour, high spirits, and loyalty of

the boy, grew on O'Connor's liking. The praise of the old Count, of Alma, and of Riekchen, themes which never wearied the affectionate fosterer, became familiar to O'Connor's ears, and by slow degrees grateful to his spirit. Absent from them, he became every day more fond of them.

At length one evening the faint outline of the Riesengebirge was pencilled in airy hues on the blue distance of the horizon. On the following day, as they neared the mountain frontier of Silesia, the wild and beautiful features of the scene grew into distinctness and substance. With a lighter heart, Allaster O'Connor rode on his way. The mountains rose on either hand ; the free streams rushed from rock and cliff ; the air was sharp and bracing ; every breeze bore the fresh resinous odour of the pine woods. Allaster felt that he breathed more freely. The dull warm air of the plains oppresses the breast as well as the

spirit of the mountaineer. As he descended the heights near Wildenau, the Valley of the Neiss lay beneath him, with the fortress of Neiss frowning over the river, which wound through low humid meadows yet marshy from the inundation; for Roth, commandant of the town, had laid the country under water to impede old Schwerin's operations.

There was a strong garrison still there, though Neuperg had moved forward; Gordon's hussars were quartered there also, so the town was O'Connor's destination. As he rode on, the tramp of horses came to his ear, and as the road wound round a knoll, he came on a party of horsemen riding slowly along. They all belonged to Gordon's hussars, and with several of them O'Connor had made acquaintance at Vienna.

"Allaster, meinbester, here you come at last!" cried Turkheim.

“Karl, my fine fellow, how goes it here?” said O’Connor. “How do you do, Bartenstein—and you, Erdödy?”

They turned their horses’ heads towards the town, and surrounded O’Connor, whom they received with cordial kindness. He was one of themselves, and that was enough to secure him a place and a welcome in the frank, fearless, and thoughtless brother band.

“Anything stirring here?” inquired O’Connor.

“Absolutely nothing,” said Carl Turkheim; “we might as well have been left to Old Khevenhuller to ornament Vienna with our gay dohnas and our own incomparable selves.”

“Where is Neuperg?” said Allaster; “and where is the enemy?”

“Where have you lived that you ask such questions?” said Erdödy.

“In Bohemia for the last ten days,

where I never saw a German paper ; and my havings in Cyeck could be reckoned by a tapster's arithmetic."

"Well then," said Bartenstein, "I will give you all the information I possess. Neuperg is entrenched on the heights between here and Jacgerndorf; and Frederick, having taken Brieg, has broken up from Mollwitz, and is encamped at Strehlen."

"But, in heaven's name, what are we doing?" demanded O'Connor.

"Why, nothing ! like ploughmen round a showman's box, we are waiting to see what we shall see. Both armies are observing each other, but since they measured their strength at Mollwitz, they do not like to come to blows. Frederick, they say, is resting on his arms in expectation of receiving overtures from the Queen, with whom he has expressed his willingness to conclude a treaty of alliance offensive and de-

fensive, if she will cede to him the whole of Lower Silesia."

"Our government dare not conclude such a treaty," exclaimed O'Connor. "They dare not patch up such a shameful peace while the stain of Mollwitz remains unefaced."

"We trust to the high spirit of the Queen for this hope!" said Erdödy; "let her call on Hungary, and ere such a concession be wrung from her, many a horse will run masterless, and many a plume will sweep the dust."

"And, in the meantime," said Turkheim. "Neuperg is recruiting and remounting the cavalry. The hussars are pretty well off; our light nags and light weights suit the country; but the heavies are sadly cut up."

"They say our fellows worked well at Mollwitz," said O'Connor.

"So we did," said Bartenstein; "Roemer brought the cavalry down on the right of the Prussians under Schulenberg; we charged five times; at last we broke the Prussians. They fled in disorder, and Schulenberg was killed. Prince Leopold, commanding their second line, fired on the routed Prussians as well as on us. Old Roemer, the gallant fellow, fell; and then our brave fellows passed along the whole front of the Prussians, and joined the left wing of our army, with which Neuperg was about to attack the Prussian infantry."

"Frederick may be a general, but he is no soldier," said Turkheim. "It is doubtful even whether he possesses the wolf's virtue—courage. When Roemer broke the blue lines, Frederick set spurs to his horse, and rode up and down among the mob trying to rally them, like a whipper-in calling a pack of riotous hounds to

order, but he ended by catching the panic, and fled the field. He reached Oppelu with three or four attendants, the place was occupied by our irregular horse, they fired on him, and he rode off, calling out to his aides-de-camp, 'I am better mounted than you, good-bye.' At day-break his English grey failed, and he stopped at a village apothecary's house, where a chasseur found him, and told him he was a conqueror."

"Our staunch old Neuperg behaved better," said Erdödy. "He had a horse killed under him, and received two wounds."

"How came it to pass that we lost the day?" inquired O'Connor, his heart bounding as he listened to the tale of his comrades' gallant deeds.

"When our cavalry was drawn to the left wing to support Neuperg's combined attack with left and centre, our right was

uncovered. The Prussian left, covered by the swampy stream of Lanchwitz, was fresh. Schwerin flung them on our right, which was outflanked and driven in on our centre ; and so, after five hours of hard fighting, we retreated."

"Hoot, man !" said Mackenzie, an old Scotchman, who had a troop of the Gordon's ; "what's the good of cramming the lad with these fag ends of fine bulletin phrases ? Just tell him the truth, and this will be, that we fought well, the Prussians fought better, we got well thrashed, but we will thrash them the next time out of spite."

"And, in the meantime, we are in luck," said Erdödy ; "there is nothing going on but a little outpost duty, with an occasional brush with the Prussian foraging parties, and this all falls to our share."

"The light cavalry are fighting this

campaign single handed," said Karl von Turkheim.

"The infantry fellows are getting quite cross on it," said Bartenstein. "They say they have nothing to do but to appear on parade, and to flirt with the pretty girls of Niess."

"I'll be sworn," said O'Connor, laughing, "that the Gordon's do not leave them in undisputed possession of that part of the garrison duty. I back Karl against any man in the division to carry off the best assortment of brown, black, and golden curls in a given time."

"Bartenstein and I," said Erdödy, "are doing our best, our petit possible to keep up the honour of the corps; but Karl is sadly changed; he has taken up a passion for solitary rides and moonlight rambles; he damns the promenade and eschews the ball-room as piously as the parish priest eschews matrimony or the devil."

“Living the sweet past over again in memory, or dreaming of the bright future sunned by the Countess Ottilie’s magnificent eyes ! said Allaster ; “ which is it, Karl ?”

“ Or enjoying the present ?” put in Bar-tenstein.

“ Nonsense !” cried Turkheim ; but he reddened as he spoke.

“ Nonsense !” said Mackenzie, “ like enough it is nonsense ; but I am just thinking the nonsense comes in the shape of a pretty girl with golden hair, and a voice like a lark singing above the white thorn-tree ;” and Mackenzie whistled the air of ‘ Bonnie Lassie wi’ the lint white locks.’

Turkheim seemed to be nettled by all this raillery. He spurred his horse sharply to leap a stream running near the road side. The horse lost his footing in the marshy soil, and Karl was obliged to give it

up with a muttered curse on the treacherous ground and on his baulking horse.

"Aweel, laddie," said Mackenzie, "ye need na curse the stream nor your nag in that fashion. I said no harm till you, for I mind the time, though 'tis long ago too, when I was fond of such like nonsense mysel'."

"I say, Allaster," said Turkheim, who had recovered his good temper, "you shall be appointed interpreter to Mac; we all speak a little English at a push, but his Scotch and German are alike unknown tongues to us."

Half an hour's sauntering riding brought them to the gate of Niess.

"We dine at the Stadt Wien," said Bartenstein; "there is a capital table d'hôte and first-rate wine. Old Gordon himself messes with us—you will like him. The greybeard is as young as any of us: first in the field, and last at the carouse;

none of us ever saw him leave the table when we got up a regular Commers. He says the best of us are only philistersal a kneipe."

"Our mithers drank good ale, and our fathers drank glenlivat," said Mackenzie ; "so where could you get heads like ours, you that never saw honest drinking in your lives? We send the youngsters to bed, O'Connor, whenever we have a canny supper, and whatever we drink, we are able to turn out to parade next day as sober as ruling elders at a synod ; but an extra glass of tisch wein makes these boys sick drunk."

"I fancy I shall be able to see fair play between you and the Colonel," said O'Connor, laughing.

"Na doubt," said Mackenzie ; "the Irish are pretty men round a bowl, or on the green. A body might fight them across a table, and drink with them in the dark."

They dismounted in the court of the Hadt Wien, and Turkheim led the way to the Speise Saal, where he presented O'Connor to the Colonel and some other officers of the regiment.

"You'll sup with me, O'Connor," said the Colonel, as he took up his cap and sabre after dinner. "And you too, Mac."

"I'm there," said Mac.

O'Connor of course accepted the invitation.

"You lose the Redoute by this supper," said Turkheim. "As this is Sunday there will be a good meet to-night; all the pretty girls in Neiss."

"You lose naething at all," said Mackenzie. "Ye wad only see a whem silly tawpies skirling and spinning round with a hautel of daft callants; to miss this sight is nae sae muckle loss ony day, and forby a' this is the Sabbath. The Colonel will

gie us a broiled bane and a saut herring and
a braw bowl of punch, and w'se hae a
canny crack anent auld-lang-syne, when
he and I baith kenned yere uncle weel."

CHAPTER IV.

Theirs was the glee of martial breast,
And laughter theirs for little jest ;
With open hand, and brow as free,
Lovers of wine and minstrelsy.

SCOTT.

THE summer wore on unmarked by any momentous event. The affair of Mollwitz seemed destined to close the campaign it had opened. The two armies held each other in check, but neither ventured on any decided or decisive movement. Frederick remained in the camp of Strehlen, while Lord Hyndford, the British minister

at his court, laboured, in concert with Mr. Robinson, to effect an accommodation. Maria Theresa had not yet learned that lesson of pliant prudence doubly distasteful to her as a queen and a woman ; she refused to accede to Frederick's demand of the cession of Silesia, and Mr. Robinson offered in lieu of that fair province a sum of two million florins and the province of Austrian Gueldresk. Frederic, in his turn, rejected this compromise, and Robinson returned to Vienna, to wring some further reluctant concessions from the proud daughter of Hapsburg.

During this period of comparative inactivity, the light cavalry alone had still work to do. O'Connor learned his duty, and obtained a practical knowledge of his profession. His gay day-dreams of adventurous knight-errantry, of bright honour, and quick promotion, were soon dispelled by the rude touch of reality and the hard

useful lessons of experience. He learned that the soldier is but a minute part of an admirable machine, and that subalterns have but little chance of gaining sudden promotion or distinction, for their services are never noted, except when some few rare opportunities give them the chance of performing some dashing deed of gallant daring. But though the hopes of fame and promotion had receded into due distance, and taken up their proper position in the future, yet he was very happy, and enjoyed his life, thoroughly doing his duty with patient zeal, while looking forward to the slow and steady promotion of the Austrian service.

His brother officers were pleasant, gentlemanly fellows, most of them Austrians of rank, Gordon, Mackenzie, and himself being the only foreigners in the regiment. Gordon, though punctiliously strict in all matters pertaining to the service, was

kind as a father to the thoughtless lads under his command ; and though grown grey in toil and danger, he preserved unbroken the high spirits and careless gaiety of his youth. He was a noble specimen of that race now extinct—the soldiers of fortune, whose family was the regiment, whose home was the tent, whose country was the camp, whose religion was honour. Mackenzie, full of quaint jibes and keen sarcasm, which derived a touch of humour from his broad Scotch, was at heart as good a fellow as ever belted a sabre. Among the officers, there was a union and harmony which gave to their social intercourse all the unreserved intimacy of brotherly affection. The sparkling and racy effervescence of youthful happiness in which they seemed to exist, their wild love of pleasure, their frolic spirit of fun and jollity, their frank, cordial kindness to each other, and their daring gallantry in

the field, completely won O'Connor's admiration. He was happy. Time, the consoler, had soothed the anguish with which he had brooded over the loss of all he loved on earth. The cherished remembrance of his home was no longer a torture to his breast. He could dwell on the last hours of his father's life, consoled by the consciousness that he had soothed and cheered those last hours. He felt that in every thought, and word, and act of his daily life, he was fulfilling the wishes of his father, and holding pure and unsullied the name which was rendered sacred to him because it had been borne by that father whom he had loved with the full ardour of his warm heart. He was delivered at once and for ever from the harassing vexations of pecuniary embarrassments ; new interests attached him to the new career opening before him, and he entered again on the march of life with

fresh hopes springing in his breast, and young ambition throbbing in his healthful and bounding pulse.

Neiss was a very pleasant quarter. The society was good, composed as it was of the Bargerstand, with a fair sprinkling of the provincial noblesse, who had left Breslau when the Prussians had drawn the town into a treaty of neutrality. This sort of society suited excellently well the officers of the garrison, who liked the easy lounging habits of provincial life, where their rank ensured them a sort of grateful welcome, and emancipated them from all restraints which could fetter them in the pursuit of any ecentric pleasure, or the perpetration of any madcap frolic.

The citizens, most of them engaged in trade and manufacture, and many of them very wealthy, exercised a boundless hospitality; the men were generally well-informed and sensible, though not very

polished; the women kind-hearted, gossiping, bustling housewives, and the girls ignorant, innocent, merry creatures—all in their several ways enjoying their existence with thorough honest complacency. It was a soldier's paradise, that good little town.

Love is at once more and less to a German than to any other rational creature. More, seeing that neither he nor she can exist without having a love affair to employ his or her sentimental fantasies, and to speed the burning of the pipe or the play of the knitting-needles;—less, inasmuch as nowhere are such affairs more ephemeral, or less influential on the future life of the enamoured individual. Every one of O'Connor's brother officers surrendered himself to the gossamer charms of some evanescent attachment, and young men fresh from the palaces of queenly Prague and imperial Vienna, were quietly

domesticated with the good citizens of Neiss, dining at twelve o'clock, assisting in the education of piping bullfinches, winding knitting cotton, and playing round games of forfeits, in which, if they sometimes got a box on the ear from a pretty rosy girl, they had often to kiss the comfortably plump smiling mother, or to fill the father's pipe three times in succession. Allaster himself laughed, danced, and flirted with all the prettiest of the girls, but he shunned those dangerous habits of domestication. He flirted with all, and made love to none. He could not love, and he shrank from being loved. His passions had raged themselves to rest, and he dreaded their awaking, lest they should again inflict agony like that of which the burning sense was yet scarcely healed by the opiate touch of time. He loved Julia still as fondly as ever, and he trusted to her truth. So long as she remained un-

married, he believed that it was for his sake that she delayed the fulfilment of her engagement with Charley Herbert, and thus believing, no temptation could induce him to swerve from the faith he had sworn to her. A sort of superstition mingled with his reverence for the vow he had plighted her, and he felt, deep in his heart, an inexplicable assurance that if he kept that vow unbroken, Julia would still be his in spite of every obstacle of creed, and law, and absence, and time. He treasured his love and this hope shrined in the secret depth of his soul. No word which could betray it to the ridicule of his comrades ever passed his lips. To all outward appearance thoughtless as themselves, he surrendered himself, with the versatile character of his race, in seeming abandonment to every scheme of pleasure devised to speed the passing hour. The ball, the race, and the gipsy party suc-

ceeded to each other, and filled the lagging hours of pause in the struggle of the contending powers.

The manager of the Prague theatre took advantage of that anomalous sort of truce, and calculating on the patronage of the garrison, brought down his company, and gave operas and plays. As his troupe was good, he was pretty successful.

"Will you sup with me to-night, O'Connor?" asked Bartenstein, as they lounged on a bench under the lindens on the promenade, smoking their meerschaums and criticising the women who passed before their tribunal at every turn of the walk.

"When, and where?" inquired O'Connor, laconically enough.

"I will call for you after the ballet," said Bartenstein; "where, matters nothing."

"Where, matters much," said O'Connor, dryly.

"Well, then," said the Count, "since you must know, I will give you the history of the supper. I betted a supper against a pair of gloves with little Adeline, and I lost ; so I give the supper at her house, and I invite the men, she asks the women. La Corelli and the French girl that came out as Hebe last week, Adeline herself, and old Madame Hatzman, as a chaperon for the young ones for the petticoat part of the company."

"Three pretty women, certainly, and a reverend vice, a grey iniquity to guard them," observed O'Connor ; "now for the men, Bartenstein."

"Adeline's brother, and Hartzman, Erdödy, myself, and you, if you will join us."

"I stay at home," said O'Connor ; "I

should only spoil the party, and be terribly *de trop*."

"Nonsense ; be a good fellow for once in your life," persisted Bartenstein."

"I won't bestow my tediousness on you, that's flat," said O'Connor.

"Come, I say," said Bartenstein ; " you can try for the Hebe's heart."

"Not being an alchemist, I most assuredly will not waste my time seeking for treasure that does not exist. I cannot afford to buy love ; if I want it I must look for it where I may get it gratis."

"Domestic felicity and disinterested affection, eh !" said Bartenstein, laughing ; " a cottage all over woodbine, and sheep and a watch-dog, and Lottchen or Gretchen making soup for her husband and her brats ; is this your style ? You have missed your vocation ; you ought to go into the convent of Camenz, for you are

far too good for this delightful, devilish, wicked, witching world of ours."

"Not a bit too good, but far too poor and too proud to buy or beg the smile of a dancer. I would as soon ask a shopkeeper for a present of his wares."

"Well, I must ask Von Harrach in your place," said Bartenstein, as he strolled away with a look of contemptuous pity for O'Connor's bad taste.

Allaster smiled with a half scornful merriment, and yet he pitied Bartenstein, who was a right good fellow, but too honest to get safe out of the bad hands he had fallen into.

"A gude resolution gin ye can haud up till it," said Mackenzie, who, coming up at the moment, overheard a part of the colloquy. "But I misdoubt they'll laugh ye out o' it sune, my puir laddie."

"Never!" said O'Connor, "never! I

act according to my own will, and under heaven there breathes not the man who who could lead me one hair's breadth aside from my chosen path. Why, Mac, I think a man is a thorough fool who could be laughed or rallied out of any resolution he had once avowed."

"For all that, you showed the better part of valour when you refused that daft callant's invitation. I have a misgiving that poor Bartenstein will ruin himself with that ne'er-do-weel hizzie. She has a brother that plays high, and is always in a run of luck. Last winter, at Prague, they won every florin that young Gentz of the Taaffes' had, and I was obliged to lend him money to pay his bill at the Weisser Boss. Those dancers are born deils, and this baggage is a Frenchwoman, forbye."

"I refused to go because I knew it would end in high play, and as I would not play, I did not like to be a spoil-sport

among them. As for me, I can trust myself. I can look on at play for ever, and never feel the least desire to shake a zwanziger."

"That is a' weel and gude," said the canny Scot, "until you have drawn the second flash of that cursed rustler, but there you cease to be your own master, and you begin to think it a fine thing to outdo every folly you see practised around you; and besides, these Jezebels wad lure ye to hell."

"No, Mac, no!" said O'Connor; "neither man nor woman, neither seduction nor sarcasm, could make my heart throb with a quicker pulse. And as to the brown flask, I have a good head, and rustler is not quite so strong as Galway whiskey."

"Well, as you shear off from poor Bartenstein, will ye bear up for my quarters?" said Mackenzie. "At ten o'clock you'll find me ready for you, with a

devilled fowl and a jug of toddy. Will you come?"

"I am your man, Mac," said Allaster; "and now I must ride over to Muhldorf to see the Jaeger, who has the care of Graf Hochberg's old schloss. I must have a target put up in the court of the castle; we are going there to-morrow, there is to be a gipsey party and a shooting match; we got it up yesterday while you were away with those maps for the Marshall."

"And get him to mow the long grass in the court, barring ye want to make the leddies gang about like the lassie in the sang-buke, that kilted her gown of green satin, and kilted it up to her knee."

"And the women here have such devilish thick ankles that I guess I shall not be able to bring that fashion into favour either with the women or the men. I'll just take your advice, Mac; I will mow the grass, and have the ritter saal dressed-

up with lamps and branches for the dance."

They sauntered on to the barrack, where they found Fritz walking the Sicilian mare to and fro while waiting for his master. O'Connor mounted, and rode to Muhldorf, a pretty village on the road to Ottmachau. The jaeger was not at home, and Allaster rode on to the ruined Castle of Hochberg. The forest road wound along the slopes of the hills, and through the thick pine-woods, until it led the traveller to the noble ruin, which, though crumbling beneath the hand of time, and shattered by the ravage of former wars, yet looked down in frowning grandeur over the cultivated plains spread out in all the peaceful luxuriance of their summer beauty.

In the grass-grown court of the feudal stronghold, Allaster found Count Hochberg's jaeger, and after having visited the ruins, from the high turret to the sub-

terranean dungeon, with its doors of stone turning on pivots, he settled everything for the party which the hussars were to give to the hospitable people of Neisse. Herder, the jaeger, was an intelligent man, with that native refinement of thought and taste which a man preserves untarnished in the deep woods and the sweet and solemn society of nature. He entered into all Allaster's plans for the fête, and promised to execute all his orders. Sissy was grazing among the wild shrubs in the court, but at her master's call she came to his side, and licked his hand with the fawning playfulness of a dog.

"Bitte um vergebung gnadiger herr," said the jaeger ; "but let me inform you that I saw two suspicious looking fellows in the woods yesterday. I and my junker were going our round, and we came upon them as they sat by their fire in the millstone quarry. When I warned them off Count

Hochberg's lands, they said they were tinkers ; but I do not believe them, for instead of an ass and kettles, I saw four good muskets and a couple of rough Bohemian ponies near their fire. You should be on your guard, mein herr."

" They were civil to you, as it appears, Herder, so why should I trouble my head with fear of them ?"

" They dare not meddle with a jaeger. They know we never carry money, except one silver piece to make a bullet of, if we chance to meet a wahr wolf, or a witch hare that milks the cows ; and besides, they know that they could not find a hiding-place in the deepest thicket of the forest, if they were at feud with the bonny green jackets. After all, perhaps, the reason why they let us alone was that Fritzchen and I had our rifles and three stout bloodhounds with us, so that we were a match for those four rascals."

"If not poachers," said O'Connor, "they must be some of the rascals who hang on the skirts of both armies, and plunder friend and foe indiscriminately, when they do not gain enough booty by stripping the dead on the field. Give me your powder-horn, Herder."

He shook the priming from the pans of his pistols, primed them afresh, looked to the flints, tightened his girths, and mounted his mare, saying, "So now I am ready for them, be they poachers or marauders. Good-bye, Herder."

"Wildschutgen or araskrachen, they are vermin all the same!" cried Herder; "so a shot won't be thrown away on them, mein herr."

The summer day was verging towards evening: from the bed of the river, and from the glassy surface of the small pond-like lakes which fill the hollows among the lower spurs of the Riesengebirge, the white

mist rose in wreaths along the hills, the westering sun tinting its filmy veil with a rosy flush. The women were spreading their webs of linen on the grass to bleach in the dew ; the ploughmen were urging their teams along the last furrows of the steaming fields, and the cattle were wending homeward, obedient to the calls of the many-toned horns of the herdsmen, whose wild soothing melody sighed plaintively through the arches of the forest. O'Connor's path lay deep in the woods, but sometimes a glade cleared of brushwood, opening upon the fair scene we have sketched, allowed him to behold it like a beautiful picture framed in by the arching tracery of the boughs of the oaks skirting the forest. He paused for a moment to gaze on the happy living world, but his mare pawed impatiently, and with her short whinnying neigh called on her master to proceed. He stroked her neck and rode on. His path

plunged deeper into the wood ; the pillar trunks of the pines rose around him, their heavy canopy of dark foliage closed overhead, and scarce a sunbeam could pierce the vault of verdure to fling a line of golden light on the pale mosses and creeping ivy which robed the forest earth. He rode on with loosened rein, in calm enjoyment of the deep quiet of the forest, until he was roused by a violent start of his mare. He looked up, a wounded stag crossed the road ; the poor animal was sobbing life away in convulsive gasps, and the blood was pouring from his throat and from a wound in his flank. He had shed his antlers, so that he could not have received the wounds in a fight with one of his dappled rivals, and it was not the season for a fair sportsman to molest the game.

“ Ha ! that is the handy-work of Herder’s friends ! ” muttered O’Connor, for he

knew that none but a poacher would fire on a stag out of season. He urged his willing charger to a better pace, as he did not want to meet the fellows, and soon reached the brow of a hill on the verge of the open country. He rode slowly down the descent ; at the foot of the slope there was a turn, where the track wound sharply round a projecting rock, almost a cliff, which overhung the road on the left hand, while a shaggy copse growing over an abandoned quarry, fringed it with a tangled screen on the other side. A thin blue line of smoke was curling up from the quarry ; it caught O'Connor's eye, and again Herder's warning recurred to his memory. Pressing his knees to the saddle with a firmer gripe, he drew up his rein, and grasped his heavy hunting whip by the end, winding the lash round his wrist, so as to have the loaded head for a weapon. He cast a vigilant glance on the sleeping

and seemingly tenantless wood. As he approached the rock, two men sprang out of the quarry, and placed themselves right in his path. They appeared to be unarmed, and wore the long loose frock coats and steeple-crowned hats of the wandering Slavonian tinkers ; weather-beaten, strong built fellows they were both, and every line in their dark faces bore the stamp of reckless villainy and profligacy, rendered ferocious by want and suffering. One of them, as he jumped into the road, whistled long and shrill, and a faint distant whistle answered his call.

O'Connor saw he was in a dangerous position, but well mounted, well-armed, and on his guard, he was ready to meet the odds against him.

One of the men held out his hat for alms like a wandergesell, and said in a drawling voice, which, however, had more of menace than of entreaty in its tone,

“ For the love of St. John of Nepomm, noble Count, give us a couple of zwandigers to help us on our journey.”

As he spoke, he placed his hand stealthily on the bridle-rein,

“ Keep off, fellow,” said O’Connor sternly, raising his whip at the same time ; but the other ruffian sprang forward, closed with O’Connor, and grasping his bridle arm at the wrist, drew a pistol from his breast, and said,

“ The purse, here ! or by all the devils you are a dead man !”

“ Ha, Richler, you scoundrel !” shouted O’Connor ; “ take that !”

He struck him a stunning blow with the loaded whip ; the bandit reeled beneath the stroke ; O’Connor shook off his relaxing grasp, and drove the spurs into the flanks of his mare ; with a snort of rage and pain she reared, tore the bridle

from the outlaw who had seized it, and plunged madly forward.

“ Hell and damnation, you know us ! I’ll stop your mouth ! ” exclaimed the outlaw. He fired, and the pistol-ball whistled harmlessly over O’Connor’s head.

O’Connor, quick as thought, wheeled round, drew a pistol from his holsters, and fired. The bandit was in the act of presenting his second pistol, when O’Connor’s ball passed through his head ; he sprang up, and fell dead at the feet of the mare. All this occupied scarcely a moment’s space, for O’Connor’s thought and deed had the quickness of instinct. O’Connor looked on the dead man, and saw that he was also a deserter from his own regiment ; the man stunned by the blow of the whip, Richler, had deserted from Mackenzie’s troop but very few days before. He was recovering, and while watching O’Connor’s

movements with dull eyes, was afraid to move a limb. At this moment O'Connor saw two men running through the wood at full speed. He did not like to wait for this reinforcement to the enemy, so he gave the rein to his charger, and dashed forward at a gallop. He did not depart too soon, for in a moment after he heard voices answering each other in the wood.

On sped the mare. O'Connor looked round with that keen eye for the lie of the country which generally belongs to a Galway rider. He saw that the road from where he then was, made a long sweep, and then came nearly parallel on the opposite slope. The distance from one point to the opposite point was scarcely a quarter of a mile in a line as the crow flies, but by the winding wheel-track it was more than a mile. From the road where O'Connor stood, the ground fell away in a steep descent, and rose as abruptly on the other

side; a few thorns grew on the stony sides of this rugged dell, and in the bottom lay a pond, whence issued a sluggish stream soaking through a reedy swamp. O'Connor's decision was prompt as his keen glance. If he followed the winding of the road, the outlaws might strike across the glen, and renew the skirmish on the opposite side.

He turned the Sicilian sharply to the brink, and urged her to the descent of the hill-side. At first she refused it, and started back; but excited by the voice, hand, and spur of her undaunted rider, she dared the pass with the activity and sure-footedness of a stag.

Now springing from rock and bank, now almost sliding on her haunches, while the stones displaced by her hoofs rolled down into the glen, she reached the bottom of the descent, dashed across the swamp, though at every stride she sunk over her

posterns, and came at the brook. It was wide, and the banks were broken and rotten ; but both she and her rider seemed to feel the quickening excitement of a fox-hunt in their boiling pulses. Cheered by O'Connor's wild cry of encouragement, she cleared the water, and gallantly breasted the steep beyond. The summit and the road were nearly gained, when the report of a musket rang sharply through the air, and a ball passed through O'Connor's left arm, inflicting a sharp flesh wound.

“On, Sissy, on !” he cried. She struggled forward and upward. The hill was steep, and the stony soil afforded but treacherous footing ; but on she went, and straining every sinew to her task, reached the road, blown, panting, with the foam wreaths on her mouth, and the mire of the swamp staining her heaving flanks. “Gallantly done, my beauty ; you are a sweet

little fencer !” said O’Connor. A few minutes more placed him out of danger, and he then pulled up, and allowed the mare to breathe from her exertions.

His wound, at the moment he had received it, caused him scarcely any painful sensation ; but he now had time to think of it. The blood was flowing fast down his arm, and a dull numbing pain began to be felt as the wound grew stiff, and a burning thirst parched his lip and throat. He bethought himself of the Jaeger’s house at Muhldorf, where he could have his arm bandaged, and obtain a bowl of goat s milk. He did not, moreover, like the neighbourhood of the woods which harboured such villainous company, and where he was obliged to look with jealous vigilance into every thicket of brushwood which could afford a cover to a lurking assassin ; so he turned joyfully into the first wood-cutter’s path which led to the open country, and

soon reached the skirts of the too hospitable wood, and saw the cultivated fields spread out before him in all their peaceful busy loveliness.

The Jaeger's house stood a little apart from the village, between the church with its tapering spire, glittering in the sunny air of evening, and the old ivied mill, whose idle wheel seemed to wait the ripening harvest which should wake it again to life and cheerful toil. Orchards and gardens surrounded the forester's dwelling, and the path to it wound among the old apple-trees, beneath whose laden boughs O'Connor was obliged to bend his head to the mane of his charger. As he bent beneath the fragrant arches of the fruit trees, he heard the low deep tones of a well-known voice, and looking in the direction whence the sound came, a very interesting picture met his eyes.

On a stone bench beneath a trellis, fes-

tooned with the twining wreaths of the hop, sat a beautiful peasant girl, fresh, plump, rosy, with soft blue eyes, and a profusion of curls and plaits of paly golden hair wound round her head. Hers were the face and figure which might in time assume an appearance of buxom coarseness, but as yet health and youth only gave to her a ripe luxuriance of beauty which was very delicious. Her dress, a petticoat striped in blue and scarlet, a black boddice laced with silver cord, short white sleeves, and a linen kerchief drawn in a multitude of small plaits over her bosom, showed the rich symmetry of her figure. Reclined on the grass at her feet, with her hand in his, lay Karl von Turkheim. His eyes were fixed on her blushing face, and a smile, half pleasure, half triumph, was lurking under his moustache, while his lip whispered in

the low, earnest tone of passion the vows he had whispered to many a one before. The girl's look and attitude suddenly changed as O'Connor passed before her.

"Ah, Liebe Gott!" she exclaimed, and started up, blushing to the temples and trembling like a newly-caught leveret.

Karl sprang to his feet and turned fiercely on the intruder; but recognizing O'Connor, he laughed, and told him that he would meet him at the village inn. He then turned again to the girl, who had sunk back on the bench and hid her face in her hands; "Fear not, Liebchen," he whispered, "I will see you at sunset to-morrow, sweet Clärchen. This is my dearest friend; you must say a friendly word to him when next you meet him; and now, mein schatz, lebe wohl."

O'Connor, meanwhile, made his way

to Herder's cottage. He had often taken Herder with him on fishing expeditions among the trout streams in the forest, so that he was well known in the cottage, and a great favourite with the good-humoured, bustling Frau Herder. She soon dressed his wound with the skill she had acquired in medicating the hurts of her husband; and instead of the goats' milk which he asked for, she produced a half flask of carlowitzer, which she prescribed on account of the loss of blood. O'Connor offered the little woman a gold ducat, which she refused, so he put it slyly into the tiny hand of her youngest hope which was asleep in its cradle, and then gallantly kissing the brown and yet ruddy cheek of the dame, as he had often done in Herder's presence, he mounted and rode up the straggling street of the hamlet.

“Well, Karl!” he said, when they met,

“we have had a busy day; you love-making, and—”

“Hist!” said Karl in English, as he mounted his horse before the inn door; “speak English! The girl is Herder’s daughter.”

“I am sorry I intruded on your tryste,” said O’Connor.

“Be a good fellow for once, Allaster, and keep my secret,” said Turkheim; “I do not wish that any of our fellows should know of my affair here.”

“I thought,” said O’Connor, laughing satirically, “that these conquests were only made to be proclaimed. Judging of our fellows’ intentions, by the way they boast of their successes, I was about to suggest the propriety of inscribing the women’s names on the colours, along with all the other victories. It would save a world of trouble, and ensure the desired publicity.”

“I do not want to play the prude,” said Turkheim; “but there is something in this business that I cannot tell you; and besides, Sternberg of the Cuirassiers is the Countess Zichy’s brother; he never liked me; and if he found me out, he would make a devil of a business about it. But, good heavens, Allaster! your sleeve is soaked with blood.”

“I have got a ball through my arm,” said O’Connor; “I was attacked near Hochberg by robbers, Wagner and Richler, who deserted from us last month; it seems they have taken to the highway. I knocked down Richler with my whip, the other rascal fired at me; so I saved the Provost Marshal a job, and shot him. Their comrades were coming up, so I had to run for it, and to be quit of them the sooner I crammed little Sis at the wolf-schlucke, she took me over it in her usual style, but in ascending the bank the fel-

low got a shot at me, and drilled a hole through my arm; and now let us get on at our best pace, or the gate will be shut."

CHAPTER V.

The banquet, by the fountain side,
While the small birds rejoiced on every bough,
The dance that followed, and the noontide slumber,
The torches planted in the sparkling grass
Where many a syren voice sang down the stars.

ROGERS.

THE hussars had asked all the world to their fête. The citizens liked the soldier-hosts, and the girls, of course, insisted on the full and due discharge of the paternal and maternal duties of chaperonage, so there was scarcely an invitation refused, and every one came out with the determi-

nation to be pleased, which insures the success of a gipsy party. The families had their carriages ; and as each of the girls, who were pretty or flirtable, had an avowed lover among the garrison, every lumbering coach had a gallant hussar or dragoon on duty at the door. Two or three young married belles gave their cavaliers seats in their open calèches, and these happy mortals were envied by all the rest of the spurred and epauletted tribe. A host of the unattached brought up the rear, where the cavalry man, on his high-bred Turk or Arab, curvetted beside the young cit on his ambling nag, fat and scant of breath, or the infantry man on the showy, broken down hack from the stables of the Pferdephilister. It was a gay and glittering calvacade as it wound along the tortuous track to Hochberg. When they reached the scene of O'Connor's encounter with the outlaws, the men-

scanned with curious eyes the ground, the rock, and the quarry ; while the women, in spite of the courage imparted by the sense of security, numbers, and daylight, looked timidly into the dark vaults of the pine wood, and saw the shadow of a lurking bandit in the shade of every tree.

On the place of the affray no sign of violence remained, save one dark red stain on the sand, which the summer dews had not effaced. The woods around were mute and still as sleep, but two ravens, wheeling in low circles over the tree tops, sometimes broke the silence with their boding croak.

“The outlaws have hidden the body in the wood there,” said Colonel Gordon, as he pointed to the carrion birds.

“I would give something,” said O’Connor, who rode beside the old Colonel, with his arm in a sling ; “I would give some-

thing to know that I had not done the hangman's duty on that poor wretch."

"I have always observed that Irishmen hate an execution, however necessary and just," observed Gordon. "As for me, I look on deserters and outlaws as just so many skulking wolves. It is only almost a pity to waste powder on such riff-raff kerls who would finely become a brow tow and a wooddie."

"Do you mind the burnie, Colonel?" said Mackenzie, pointing down into the dell; ye're a bold rider your ain sel, but ye winna say that brook was not a desperate leap."

"I had rather take the most rasping fence in the Lothians than that swampy stream," said the Colonel; "you are a good horseman, O'Connor."

"Looking at it now, I think it is a stopper," said O'Connor; "but when balls

are whizzing by a man's ear, he will not draw bridle for a bit of broken ground."

At that moment the party were riding along a part of the road where high rocks, almost cliffs, covered with tangled under-wood, seemingly almost impenetrable to the agile step of the fox or the lithe winding of the snake. O'Connor was the last of the whole troop, and as he pulled up his horse to shorten a stirrup leather, he remained a few yards behind the Colonel and Mackenzie. A sheet of flame suddenly glanced from the matted copse crowning the rock, and a bullet cut the air over his bending head.

"Missed again by Jove !" shouted O'Connor, as he struck the spurs into his horse's sides and turned him at the goat's path which seemed to lead towards the back of the rock where the outlaw lurked. The crevices of the cliffs were too steep and narrow for the horse, so he threw

himself from the saddle, and snatched his pistols from the holsters. Colonel Gordon, Mackenzie, and the others, who had turned on hearing the report of the shot, now came up at their best speed. The soldiers threw their bridles to the young citizens, and climbed the rocks after O'Connor. His wounded arm was useless, so that the others reached the top of the rocks as soon as he did. The thicket of under-wood appeared to be deserted. They looked into it, thrust their swords through the woven brambles, and even fired a brace of pistols into the bush, but no trace of living being could they find; and, puzzled and irritated, they descended to their horses and followed the main body of the cavalcade. O'Connor began not to like his connexion with the outlaws. A brush with an enemy in open day is all well enough, but to feel that your steps are followed by a cowardly assassin is a very

unpleasant sensation. To face a boar at bay is a pleasant though dangerous excitement, but to know that a wolf is dodging you at night is a misery.

“This is getting to be a nuisance,” said the Colonel; “I must set the forest-guards to dislodge those fellows. You must take care of yourself, O’Connor, they are making it a death feud with you.”

“Hang the fellows!” said O’Connor, “they mean to worry me. The next time I meet them I will try to close my account with them finally.”

The Jaeger Herder met the gipseying party at the foot of Hochberg, and marshalled the guests to the court of the noble ruin. The grass had been mown, the target set up, the old ritter saal tapestried with festoons of wild flowers and pine branches, the broad antlers of stags attached to the quaintly-carved corbels, where sprung the groined arches of the

roof, supported the torches which were to illuminate the evening dance. On the narrow terrace, extending from the castle wall to the verge of the cliff, mine host of the Stadt Wien had made his preparations, and sat himself on an old fallen tree in a sort of beatified contemplation of the banquet he had set forth, with chevreuil and wild boars' heads, and all the other luxuries of the German kitchen, not forgetting the dark blue forellen of the mountain streams. These solid comforts were flanked by a goodly array of brown tapering flasks of many a vintage, from the luscious Ausbruch of Hungary to the amber dew of the Rheinland vineyards, imperial Tokay, princely Johannisberger, and priestly Hocheimer. But the jolly rotundity of mine host soon rolled itself away from the tables to revolve with supreme complacency round the moss-grown basin of an ancient fountain which he had

filled with sparkling moselle imbedded in ice.

In the court of the ruin Herder had assembled a band of his comrades in the gentle woodcraft, to try their skill against the officers of the garrison, among whom there were a good sprinkling of capital rifle shots. A fair and joyous group of village maidens, in their gay-coloured gala dresses, sat under the shade of a weeping birch, each with her small basket of fruit or flowers. The band was at its post, the horses were picketted under the trees, and in laughing groups, or whispering couples, the guests, wandered, climbed, ran, or sauntered through the beautiful wooded cliffs, and forest glades round the feudal stronghold, waking its long silent echoes with the gleeful voices of youth, and love, and mirthful life.

The rifle-shooting came off before the dinner. O'Connor, who was singularly

expert in the use of the weapon, was kept out of the lists by his wounded arm; of the other officers, many were good marksmen, but none of them could rival the Jaegers; and, among the latter, Herder was celebrated for his peerless skill, and generally acknowledged to be the best shot of the Riesengebirge. After all the competitors had tried their skill of fortune, with more or less success, he fastened a card, the ace of hearts to a tree, and challenged Turkheim, who was the best among the officers, to pick out the figure at the usual distance, two shots to each man.

Turkheim's first ball cut the bark of the tree, the second took off a corner of the card.

"I shoot worse each time," said Turkheim, as he retired from the contest.

"They are fair shots all, Herr Rittmeister," said Herder, laughing; "but if

the mark were a wild boar's head, you would be in danger of feeling his tusks." He fired as he spoke, and the other jaegers gathered round the tree, and, with a shout of triumph, pointed to the perforated card—the heart had vanished.

"Leave it where it is," said Herder; and he added, nodding to O'Connor as he spoke, "I will give you all a pattern of work, such as a true jaeger need not be ashamed of, and then let who will try it, and let who can beat it."

He loaded his rifle with more than common care, greasing the leather and driving down the ball with the utmost caution, then slowly raising the clouded barrel, he fired, and the bullet passing through the same hole, lodged over the first in the trunk of the tree.

"Now, my lads, have at it," he cried, "and see which of you can beat old Herder!"

“You would be a dangerous enemy, Herder,” said Türkheim, who never seemed to be comfortable in Herder’s company, and yet, by some inexplicable chance, generally found himself near him during the day.

“I did nothing out of the common way, then,” said the good-humoured woodsman. Lord love you, Captain, I could pick out all the aces in the pack and cover the balls afterwards. The devil could not wish a saint worse luck than to be my target; so it is lucky I have not an enemy in the world.”

Herder was declared conqueror, and he received the prize, a purse netted by the Provincial Chancellor’s beautiful wife. The purse was filled by a subscription, and the queen of the feast presented it to the hardy forester, with a smile which many a white jacket envied him.

The banquet followed. It went off like

all gipsy feasts, with laughter and jest, fun and flirtation, a running fire of quizzing and raillery, a volley of champagne corks, and equal enjoyment of each and all. When the sun went down the torches were lighted in the old ritter saal, and the dance followed the feast. It was a beautiful summer night. The moon already high in heaven became brighter and more bright as the lingering radiance of the gorgeous sunset paled from the sky. Her light silvered the wide shadowy masses of the sleeping woods. The air loaded with dew and with the fragrance of the forest flowers, sighed through the open tracery of the windows of the ancient hall. Bright shone the quivering torchlight over the gallant soldiers and the lovely women, whose presence seemed for a moment to restore the vanished time when power and pomp revelled in those now crumbling walls.

O'Connor, whose wound prevented his joining in the dance, sat on the window-sill, a pleased though quiet spectator.

"This scene reminds me of the opening of the Decameron," he said. "Ours is a happy life, Mackenzie ; and those bright hours of a soldier's career embody all the romance that yet exists in the work-day world."

"True," said Mackenzie ; "pleasure is a happy thing for young men like you, laddie, and a soldier's life is a happy one for you. But still there is a dark reverse to the medal. Here am I now nae better than a withered pine that winna grow green in the simmer sun. I have nae kin and nae country. I have warstled with the world, and I hae gotten my koup, but to gain that I have lived amang strangers, and I maun dee amang them, and rest in a lone grave on a foreign field. That's the common lot of poor devils like us, O'Connor."

“I have no country, I have no kindred,” said O’Connor ; “ the Austrian camp will be my home, and a soldier’s grave, or the slow but sure promotion of the Austrian army will be my reward for my service.”

“ If ye are alone in the world’s waste, this will suit ye weel, Allaster,” said Mackenzie, whose thoughts had wandered back over long years. He rarely allowed them such liberty, and now that they had crept from his control, he could not recall them. “ When I hunted the deer in Glen Dhu, there was a bonnie lassie that I loved weel, and she looked on me kindly ; even yet I think I see her smile and the blink of her saft blue eye. She had na tocher, and I had nothing to offer her but luvè and pooreith, and her kin wad nae hear o’ it. Sae we plighted our troth to each other, and I left her to seek fortune in the wars. And when I had won what would

enable me to marry my bonnie lassie, I went back to Scotland, and found her true to me, though sore her kin had pressed her to forget me and marry ; but she held her plighted troth to her lover. And we met, and gaed down by the burnie, and sat under the auld birk-tree, and pued the gowans as we first used to do lang syne ; but death was in my Annie's breast, sorrow and pining had done their work, and on the day we were to have been wedded I saw her laid in the kirk-yard. And sae that is the life of a soldier of fortune."

"The jaegers are dancing with the peasant girls," cried Turkheim, coming to the window in exuberant spirits. "Come out, Bartenstein—come out, Erdödy, and let us have a waltz. Come out, Allaster, and give us the sanction of your venerable presence."

The music ceased, the parting healths were drunk after the last dance was ended,

and then began the merry confusion of departure. Horses were harnessed, ladies cloaked and shawled, hands were pressed in the bustle, and eyes or even lips met in stolen and transitory bliss. The companionships of the various parties were arranged as chance, or convenience, or the silent agreement of responsive feelings directed. The carriages wound slowly down the hill, the horsemen followed, the jaegers and peasant girls turned into the shorter forest path leading to Muhldorf, and the weird grey ruins of Hockberg lay once more silent and deserted ; the voice of the deep woods and the whispering of their heaving foliage alone sounding among the crumbling towers sentinelled by the bat and the owl sailing athwart the white moonlight in their circling flight.

Allaster and the other officers rode along in silence which contrasted with the remembered merriment of the morning.

The languor which follows the joyous excitement of a day of pleasure exerted its depressing influence on every one. The effect of this reaction became more marked every moment, and when they reached Niesse, and were admitted, the guests dispersed in silence to their respective domiciles, and the officers rode on to the barracks. Von Harrach met them in the yard; having been on duty he had not been to Hochberg.

“ Good news, Colonel ! ” he exclaimed, “ we shall have some work immediately.”

“ Where ! where ! how do you know ? ” was shouted on all sides.

“ I can only tell you what I know,” said Harrach. “ I supped with the Commandant, who told me that the negotiations are broken off ; neither the Queen nor Frederick will treat further of the peace, so that we shall be allowed at last to wipe out the stain of Mollwitz.”

"Glorious, by Jove!" exclaimed O'Connor.

"Hoch lebe das traus Oesterreich!" exclaimed the veteran Colonel; and at once a long, wild cheer burst forth, as like one man they echoed his shout of loyalty.

CHAPTER VI.

'Twas bustle in the court below—
Mount and march forward ! forth they go.
Steeds neigh and trample all around ;
Steel rings, spears glimmer, trumpets sound !

ROKEBY.

THE feverish fatigue caused by his wound, which though not dangerous, had been irritated by the excitement of the fête, and by the treacherous strength of the mellow tokay, held O'Connor sleepless and restless during the night ;, but after the surgeon had dressed his arm in the morning, he fell into a sleep which lasted

unbroken until he was roused by Mackenzie's voice.

"There is something to do the day!" he exclaimed, as he entered the room. "Are ye on the sick list, laddie?"

"No, no,—ready for anything, fun or fighting, from pitch and toss to manslaughter!" answered O'Connor.

"Then dress quickly, and tell your fellow to feed your horses and get your pack ready."

"What are we to do?" inquired Alaster.

"My certie I canna tell ye. I only ken that an orderly has brought despatches from Neeperg, both for Commandant Roth and for our Colonel, and that Gordon has given me orders to have my troop paraded for service, and to take rations for two days. I met Stilling in the yard, and asked him were you fit for duty? he says not. But I just thought I'd speer at your

ainsell, for cases have been scarce of late, so your wound is a windfall for the old anatomist, and by good management he may keep you on a month or so for his private amusement. He's a canny chiel, the doctor."

"For as canny as he is, I'll be hanged if he make a perquisite of me," said O'Connor, who was dressing as well as he could with one arm. "If you should see Fritz, send him to me, Mac."

O'Connor found the troop drawn up in the square. Many of the officers of the garrison were lounging about in groups, in impatient expectation that some news would transpire. The citizens were thronging in crowds to watch the movements of the troops. A vague but general feeling of undefined anticipation seemed to pervade the town and all that were therein, civil or military. The soldiers not on duty, instead of dispersing themselves

through the town as usual, lingered in groups about the barrack discussing the probable results of the movements which might be in contemplation, and ever as they talked, they listened with eager desire for the deep warning roll of the drum, or the thrilling call of the cavalry bugle. As yet no order had been given except to Mackenzie, no men except his troop appeared under arms, and yet a conviction had been communicated throughout the whole force in Neisse that the Marshal meant to rouse himself from his lethargy, and make at last some bold and decisive movement. This presentiment was universal and unaccountable as the silent hush of listening expectancy with which all nature awaits the coming thunder-storm. It was not alone the wild ardour and longing for the field which seems innate in soldierly spirits, that animated the Austrian army. It was a thirst

for vengeance, and a savage sense of manly shame rankling in their breasts since the day of Mollwitz, where their veteran war-worn legions and tried generals had bent before the drill-formed soldiers, and yielded to the untried king of the new-made Prussian monarchy. They burned to efface that stain, and for months past both men and officers, like bloodhounds in the leash with their game in view, had chafed against the apathy which held them in dishonourable inactivity in face of the enemy.

“There he is ! there he comes !” cried Turkheim, as the Colonel rode into the square, accompanied by an officer of the Marshal’s staff.

The aide-de-camp’s practised eye scanned the fine body of troopers who sat their hardy horses with the quiet, determined look of tried soldiers. There they were, the veterans of Italy and of the mili-

tary frontier, and the young soldiers who longed to imitate their old comrades, and all alike anxious for the word which should send them forth to the field, to fight the battle of their invaded country and their noble queen. A stern smile of soldierly pride gleamed athwart the weatherbeaten face of Mackenzie when he caught the look of approbation with which the staff-officer examined his brave fellows.

“Here are your instructions, Captain Mackenzie,” he said; “you will proceed towards Strehlen, to observe the enemy. Take the Munsterberg road, by which the distance is about six miles. Approach the enemy’s position as closely as you can with prudence venture. If you fall in with any of his outposts you may attack them, if isolated and not superior to your troop in force. If supported or strongly posted, avoid a collision, which could only compromise the safety of your troop and impede the per-

formance of the duty for which you are sent out. If possible, reconnoitre the country on the enemy's flank as far as Schweidnitz and the Zoltenberg. You will thence proceed to Frankenstein, and make your reports to the Marshal." He then added in a louder tone, "The Marshal relies on your well-known zeal, and on the daring and activity of your men for the performance of this duty with all the boldness and celerity consistent with the safety of your troop, and the unimpaired effective condition of both men and horses."

The men heard these words, and urged by a sudden headlong impulse of proud satisfaction, responded by a long wild cheer, while every hand grasped the sabre's hilt, as if the enemy were before them and their bugles were sounding the charge. Mackenzie bowed low ; while his hard features expanded, and his keen grey eyes lighted

up with the glow of honest, manly pleasure in even this slight recognition of his long services.

“ We have got the route, Mac,” said Gordon, when the aide-de-camp was gone. The Marshal is at Frankenstein, and we are ordered to take up an advanced position in the village between Ruchenbach and Nimptsch. I believe the Marshal intends to look after the Breslau people, and thrash them out of their humbug neutrality. At all events you do not return to this town, so you had better give your orders to your servants as to your kit and your nags. Tell this to O’Connor and Von Harrach.”

A few minutes sufficed to give the necessary orders. The officers fell in, Mackenzie gave the word to wheel into column, and the troop moved forward on the road to Munsterberg.

The country bore but few and slight

traces of war and its attendant ravages. The Austrians, being in the territory of the Queen, had not plundered their fellow-subjects ; they observed the most strict discipline, paying for everything, even to the green forage for the horses, and taking their billets in the way least vexatious to the peasants and citizens. On the other hand, the Prussians observed a discipline not a whit less rigorous. Frederick looked on Silesia not merely as the theatre of war, but as a future province of his kingdom ; he sedulously sought to gain the affection of the people ; he respected their liberties, and consulted their interest, protecting by his stern enforcement of his commands the persons and properties of his future subjects from every outrage. The effect of his policy was soon made visible by the conduct of the Silesians. While all other inhabitants of the widespread dominions of Austria, though dif-

ferent in race, and blood, and language, were united in the brotherhood of patriotism, and the universal loyalty to the daughter of Hapsburg, the Silesian remained a calm and impassive spectator of the struggle, although his own fair province was to be the prize of the victor. But there was more of policy than of indifference in this apparent apathy to the contest on whose result depended the allotment of his allegiance. Religion, as well as interest, had its full influence in this conjunction. The commercial interests of Silesia were by nature identified with those of Prussia; but a common faith was even a more stringent bond of unity between them. The Protestant people of Silesia were blended with the descendants of the Protestants of Bohemia, whom Ferdinand had driven into exile, after the battle of the White Mountain, where the laws and the faith, the liberties

and the lives of the Bohemians were trampled under foot by the bigot emperor. Time had rolled on in vain; the remembrance of that day lay deep in the heart of the Silesians, and led them to look on the Prussians as avengers and deliverers, rather than as enemies.

Passing by Munsterberg, Mackenzie proceeded towards Strehlen. He soon entered the district which had been the scene of the operations preceding the affair of Mollwitz. The silent influence of the changing seasons had obliterated every trace of the struggle. The peasants pursued their rural labours undisturbed by the threatening neighbourhood of hostile armies. The peaceful furrow of the plough had effaced the scars of war from the teeming bosom of the earth, and over the fields so lately torn up by the passage of cavalry and artillery, the corn was waving rich and uninjured. The peasants, as

they mowed their luxuriant hay crop, while waiting the ripening harvest, could hear the roar of cannon, and the inspiring sound of martial music echoing through their quiet vallies, and marking the hours when the parade or review presented the mimic pomp and pride of war in the Prussian camp.

Mackenzie obtained some information from the peasants, but though they answered his questions fairly and frankly, he could perceive easily enough that the strong current of popular feeling was setting in favour of Frederick. Towards evening Mackenzie had gained a perfect knowledge of the positions of the enemy. The Prussians were cantoned in the town of Strehlen and the villages round, and had thrown up some works to cover their position, which, though hastily executed, were well planned, and strong enough to resist a sudden dash from the Austrians. Ac-

according to the statements of the peasants, Frederick was assiduously occupied in remounting and remodelling his cavalry, which, besides being originally far inferior to his infantry, had been severely handled at Mollwitz.

The sun was setting when Mackenzie called a halt. The spot he had chosen for his bivouac was a secluded dell, among the low green hills between Strehlen and Nimp-scht. A small stream twined its way along the vale, between banks fringed with alder copses ; long grass clothed the slope of the acclivities on either hand, whose crests were crowned with an aged forest. A deserted mill stood beside the shrunken stream ; the blackened walls and charred fragments of the roof showed that it had been the scene of a skirmish in the early part of the campaign. Now again all was still, as if the beat of the drum and the sharp rattle of musketry had never dis-

turbed that lowly haunt of humble and happy toil. The inhabitants were gone, and the hearth was tenantless ; but the sycamore boughs waved green above the roofless cottage, and the neglected garden yet bloomed through the long feathery ears of the grass which grew up among the untended flowers.

The nearest outpost of the enemy being distant some miles, and the face of the country giving sufficient security against surprise, the men prepared for their bivouac with careless gaiety. The horses were allowed to graze for an hour before they were picketed and supplied with their feed of black bread ; the arms were stacked, the fires lighted, and the men gathered round them to prepare their rations. The officers established themselves among the ruins of the mill, building their fire upon the desolate hearth, and spreading their

supper on the fragment of a door propped up on stones.

“ This is delightful,” said O’Connor, as the carlowitzer passed from hand to hand ; “ with such a sky above our bivouac, who would wish himself back under a roof ? ”

“ The bivouac is vera weel, or, at least weel aneugh the summer,” said Mackenzie, “ but when the wind blaws cauld, ye will just like the ingle neuk in your ain barrack-room, a wee bit better than the brae side for yere bed ; and may be ye wad come to relish your dinner off a table as weel as off a door, and to like a quaigh o’ Glenlivat, if ye could get it, as well as this sour claret, and a’ before the year is out. Ernest, ye understand English, so I may rest my tongue a bit with it to-day.”

“ By Jove, Mac, you are unreasonable,” said O’Connor, “ if you complain to-day.”

“ Oh, Mac abuses the right he has

assumed to grumble at everything," said Von Harrach; "otherwise he would not find fault with our fare to-night. Pass me the cherry brandy, Allaster."

"Your fellow is a first-rate commissary, Ernest," said O'Connor. "This hare was a fine animal some three minutes since, and that ham is excellent."

"Aweel," said Mackenzie, "hand me the ham; I see you have learned to eat it raw, so I must look after my share of it."

"Now confess, Mac," persisted O'Connor, "that no gipsy party, with all means and appliances to ensure enjoyment, could compete with our bivouac here to-night."

"The preparation for pleasure always defeats itself," observed Mackenzie.

"And then," said Harrach, "the fuss and worry of a fête, and the double dull duty of squiring a lot of women that you care nothing for, is enough to turn any

pleasure into weariness. For instance, Bartenstein's jovial impromptu supper at the Adeline's house was far and away a better thing than his lady mother's last formal banquet at her Viennese palace. I was there, and all through the long procession of the dinner I envied my horse, who could get his feed without ceremony, and without the company of the old powdered and ruffled asses that the Countess had congregated."

"I know little of that sort of life," said O'Connor. "The charm of our roving life is in its adventures and uncertainties."

"Apropos of Adeline," said Von Har-rach, "why do you not come to her petit comité suppers?"

"Simply because I do not like to do so," said O'Connor; "besides, I know that she and her brother are plucking poor Bartenstein, and I do not want to witness the operation."

“How long do you intend to keep your vow of prudery, and to set us such an example of transcendant virtue, oh thou bearded-maiden?”

“Come, Ernest, come! I have stood the fire of your merciless raillery when our whole mess has been blazing away at me as quick and sharp as a platoon fire; so you need not attempt to frighten me with your solitary random shot of jibe or jest. You must know that I have no money to spare, that I do not want to win any money, and so I have no business in the den of that confounded gambling dancer, who has bewitched poor Bartenstein to his ruin.”

“Oh thou man of ice,” said Von Har-rach, laughing; “can nothing touch you! The light of woman’s smile falls powerless on your frozen mail.”

“I find no warmth in bought smiles,” said O’Connor.

“ Now don’t be playing the cynic,” said Ernest Von Harrach. “ Adeline’s little feet do not look the less pretty on the stage because Bartenstein pays her shoemaker ; nor do La Corelli’s black curls look the less rich because Erdödy gave her the pearls she braids them with. For my part, I like love, and I like to pay for it ; it saves me the trouble of being grateful for it. I never will marry a proud young Countess that I should woo and sue for. I’ll choose some beautiful penniless maiden, who will humbly adore me out of gratitude.”

“ I think,” said Mackenzie, “ that Alaster likes love as well as any of you, and that he loves as you could never love, at once and for ever !”

“ Heaven defend me from such a mortal malady,” cried Harrach. “ I like a quiet little liebes verhalttness that begins easily, glides on pleasantly, and ends quickly.

*Fi donc de ces vilains grands mots toujours !
Jamais !*"

So saying, Von Harrach wrapped his cloak around him, and lay down beside the fire, after wishing his comrades a gay good night. Mackenzie took up his sabre, and went round to visit his sentries, and O'Connor sat musingly beside their blazing fire. The night was gliding on her shadowy round, — the moon rolled high through the purple heaven, — the watch-fires yet burned brightly, casting their quivering and ruddy light on the crisping surface of the stream rippling along the bank, where the men lay in scattered groups. Some already slept, some sat and smoked, while the brandy-flask passed round. Beyond the limits of the bivouac, on either side, a sentry was placed, and O'Connor could see their dark forms in the moonlight, as they paced their measured walk, and could hear the clash of their

arms mingling with the liquid cadence of the rill. At length the laugh and song of the most tardy of the revellers was silent, and nought broke the stillness of the hour but the shrill neigh of some fretful charger chafing at the picket, and longing perhaps to break away and scour the meadows hoary with the night dew.

O'Connor knew not how long he thus sat. Ernest slept, and Mackenzie too had laid him down beside his comrade, and yet O'Connor waked and mused. He felt no weariness, and the pain of his wound, though slight, was yet sufficient to banish sleep. At length he was about to seek his pillow among the ruins, when a sound breaking the deepening silence of the hour attracted his attention. It seemed to come from the copse which spread its dark curtain behind the cottage. It was that light sound which can be heard more distinctly than many louder noises of the woods—

the sound of dry branches cracking under the foot, or before the passage of some wanderer of the forest. The hill was so steep there, and the copse so matted, that Mackenzie had considered his bivouac safe from any surprise from that quarter, and the guarded movements of the intruder indicated caution rather than hostile design. O'Connor, however, liked not the idea of allowing a stranger, perhaps a lurking spy, to prowl about their encampment. He was about to rouse Mackenzie, when the idea occurred to him that this nocturnal visitor might most probably be the bandit Richler. He would ask no aid in that case, for his single arm should be sufficient to defend him. He took a pistol from his holsters, and raised himself so as to command a view over the shattered wall of the cottage, and at the same time to get out of the circle of light round their smouldering fire. He gazed into the wood,

whose recesses were here and there lighted by the rays of the moon penetrating the less dense masses of foliage. After a moment of anxious scrutiny, he fancied he could make out the form of a man gliding along the skirt of the wood.

"The third time will break the *pishe-roque*," muttered he, as he cocked his pistol. "Come forward, or I fire!" he then shouted. The men sprang to their feet and seized their carbines. Mackenzie and Ernest von Harrach jumped up and grasped their sabres. The arms clashed, their locks clicked as the men made ready and presented. A moment more and a shower of bullets would sweep through the copse.

"Hold! I come!" cried a voice, and a soldier in the dark Prussian uniform emerged from the cover, and boldly strode into the midst of the hussars. He was a mere boy, and seemed worn out by fatigue. His schako, shoes, and bayonet were gone,

and he seemed scarcely able to carry the heavy musket which was his only weapon.

"In the devil's name who may you be, meinherr?" demanded Mackenzie, cross enough at this untimely alerte.

"A deserter from the Prussian army," said the boy firmly, although the word cost him an effort, for it seemed to cling to his reluctant lip ere he could pronounce it.

"Or a spy," said Mackenzie. "Do you know, young man, that I should be justified in hanging you on that sycamore bough?"

"I know it," answered the soldier. "When I made up my mind to desert, I knew that I incurred death from the Prussians, and might probably meet it at your outposts. I am ready to endure the fate I well foresaw."

"You have deserted to escape the provost marshal?" asked Mackenzie.

“No!” answered the boy, with sudden energy; “no! I am a gentleman, and I have not dishonoured my name. I am starving and weary; give me food and rest; let me warm my chilled blood beside your fire, and I will tell you why I have sought your bivouac.”

“Beware!” said Mackenzie, as he led the deserter to the fire, and the menace in his tone supplied the unspoken words. If the deserter were a spy, he should have wished himself out of the hands of the Scot.

“I am in your power,” said the boy, as he threw himself down beside the fire. O’Connor placed before him the fragments of their supper and the last flask, which still contained some ruster. The Prussian at once applied himself to the vivres with the keen appetite of a man who had suffered severely from hunger and fatigue.

“Ja proste mahlgeit,” muttered Mackenzie; “the callant is not inclined to quarrel with his cook. There, take a pull at the flask !”

“Thank you, Herr Rittmeister,” said the deserter. “To your health,” Herr Fahndrich !” he added, as he took the flask from O’Connor ; “now I can speak.”

Mackenzie lighted his pipe, kicked a fresh log into the fire, and seated himself beside it to listen to the deserter’s tale.

“At Mollwitz I was an ensign in a light infantry regiment,” said the Prussian ; “I then thought I would rather die a felon’s death than betray my king, or desert my gallant comrades. I am the youngest son of Graf von Steinberg, and cousin to poor Ziethern. You know his fate ?”

“Not I,” said Mackenzie ; “never heard of him.”

“Frederick had forbidden any lights

burning in his camp after a certain hour. Going round the lines himself, he saw a light glimmering through the canvass of my cousin's tent. He entered, and found him in the act of sealing a letter to his young wife. Frederick asked him had he seen the order; Ziethern could not deny his knowledge of it, and then Frederick, in that low, cold voice which marks his most relentless mood, said, 'Open your letter and add these words, I die to-morrow.' There was an appeal to Frederick's mercy. Ere the sunset of the following day the clay was shovelled back on the lifeless breast of as gallant a soldier as ever grasped a sabre's hilt."

"Frederick was just though severe," said Mackenzie, solemnly. "Death is the due meed of a soldier's disobedience. The guilt lies in the disobedience, not in the nature of the act committed. But

what has this to do with your desertion?"

"I was under arrest for some trifle," said Steinberg. "The rumour of Zie-thern's condemnation flew about the camp. I would speak to him once more—I would have risked my life to receive his last farewell, and bear his last message to his widowed bride—poor girl, she had sent him from her two days after their marriage to join his regiment. I had no difficulty in effecting my purpose. Our regiments are recruited from certain allotted districts."

"I do not understand you. How do you mean?" said O'Connor.

"Each Prussian regiment has a certain specified district for recruiting. If voluntary enlistment does not furnish the required quota of men, the Colonel has a right to draft by ballot among the unmar-

ried men as many recruits as he wants to fill his ranks. Thus many of the men in my regiment were drawn from my father's estates. The sentry on duty at my hut was one of them. I implored him to let me pass ; he consented ; and, wrapped in his cloak, and further concealed by the obscurity of the morning twilight, I reached Ziethern's prison-tent. I was refused admission, recognized, and restored to my own prison. I was brought to court-martial, and degraded to the ranks for two years, and my promotion stopped for the two subsequent years. Four years for the fault of a moment ! The man I seduced from his duty was flogged. "Oh !" added the boy, shuddering, "it is horrible to see a man undergo that degrading punishment ; it is sickening to see the living flesh mangled by the lash, and the blood sprinkling the ground like rain ; but it is

hell upon earth to see it as I did, and to know that I was the cause of that man's torture !”

“For all that,” said Mackenzie, who saw that O'Connor and Ernest von Harrach were listening to the deserter with unfailing sympathy, “the lash is as indispensably necessary in the army, as a pair of spurs to a horseman. But go on, Steinberg, from my soul I pity you ; for I know of no position so painful or so false as that in which you stood.”

“While I stood in the ranks to witness the punishment of the man who never gave me a look of reproach, and who suffered for my sake without flinching, because he was born on my father's lands, I swore never to serve our tyrant. I left the Prussian outpost at Schwartzthal yesterday, and concealed myself in the woods until nightfall, when I tried to make my way to Neiss ; but as I knew little of the

country, I lost my way, and wandered about until this day, when I saw your troop, and followed you at a distance, determined to surrender at your bivouac."

"You cannot serve in our regiment," said Mackenzie; "we never enroll deserters; and, besides, you would fight with a halter round your neck."

"It matters not, I shall never be taken alive," said the boy, firmly. "If I cannot fall with a soldier's honour, this is lost to me for ever; I can at least die on the field of battle. Austrians! I am ready to guide you to the Prussian outposts; their careless security invites attack."

Mackenzie examined the deserter most minutely as to the strength and position of the outpost at Schwartzthal, and having obtained all the information that Steinberg could give him, he abruptly closed the conference by wrapping himself in his cloak and stretching himself beside the

fire, leaving his comrades and the Prussian to follow his example, having first sent and ordered his sentries to watch the movements of the latter.

CHAPTER VII.

The death-shot, hissing from afar,
The shock, the shout, the groan of war,
Reverberate along that vale
More suited to the shepherd's tale.

THE GIAOUR.

THE reveille sounded cheerily. The men looked to their horses, and shared their rye-bread with them; it was the only breakfast for man or beast; but the men had the schnapps-flask to mend the common fare. O'Connor kindly pressed the young Prussian soldier to share their scanty meal.

“Cornet O’Connor, you will ride forward towards Schwarzthal,” said Mackenzie. Take two men with you. Reconnoitre the Prussian position. They are right in our way, so we must fight them, if they be not too strong for us. Should you see no cause to distrust the deserter’s report, send back one of the men to hasten our march; if you find he has deceived us, return at once, and see that he do not escape. Let him have my led horse. Keep your eyes on him.”

“My life on the boy’s truth,” exclaimed O’Connor.

“Aweel, young bluid, het bluid! but ye’re no captain o’ the troop, and maybe ’tis as weel for her. Have a care ye dinna fall into the hands of the enemy. Herr von Steinberg, you will accompany Cornet O’Connor, and act as his guide.”

O’Connor, and the men he selected to accompany him were mounted in a mo-

ment; the deserter silently took the horse assigned to him, and the party set out at a sharp trot. Mackenzie soon followed his *éclaireurs*. He had advanced about three miles when he saw the orderly returning at the best speed of his horse. He brought O'Connor's report that all was exactly as the deserter had stated. The Prussians were lying in a straggling village on the skirt of the wood; but a peasant, whom O'Connor had seized as he came from the hamlet, asserted that the company was about to fall back on the camp at Strehlin.

"Forward—trot!" said Mackenzie. The troop advanced rapidly; but as they approached Schwarzthal, O'Connor, followed by von Steinberg and the hussar, galloped in.

"You are late, Mackenzie! They are off!" he exclaimed. It was true; as the hussars gained the brow of the hill above

the village of Schwarzhthal, they could descry the small column of infantry moving across the plain, like a moving speck ; but already so near another village, surrounded by gardens and a network of hedges, that Mackenzie could not venture to attack them in a position so disadvantageous to cavalry, and so excellently well suited to light infantry movements.

“We are baulked for this bout,” said Mackenzie ; “the Numptsch road lies behind those hills, we can cut into it by that gap in the ridge. It will be our shortest way to Frankenstein.”

Being so near the Prussians, it was necessary to move with precaution, as in an enemy's country. O'Connor again rode forward to reconnoitre the wooded defile through which their track led. Presently he returned.

“There is a troop of Hulans yonder !” he exclaimed, with flashing eyes. “They

have halted to refresh their horses ; we are in luck after all, and we shall turn out the Berlin parade to-day.

Halting the troop, Mackenzie rode on to the point whence Allaster had discovered the Hulans ; and, after an absence of a few minutes, which appeared too long to the impatience of the men, he returned with his keen grey eyes glittering under his shaggy sandy brows, and a grim smile on his lip, curling his grizzled moustache, looking, take him all in all, very like a Scotch terrier ready for a rat hunt.

“They are right in our way—we must cut through them,” he said, in his quick decided tones. “Harrach, you know the ground. They have halted in the meadow near the saw-mills, where we were quartered for three days before Mollwitz. They are at dinner, and their horses are feeding.”

He set about making his dispositions

for a dash at the Hulans, and in a few minutes the troop was silently wheeling round the hill, which hid them from the enemy. The excitement of the men increased every moment, though it was suppressed ; or at least the expression of it was repressed by their discipline. Von Steinberg still rode at O'Connor's side, unheeded by Mackenzie. All trace of shame or regret was gone from the deserter's face, but though firm, he was deadly pale.

“ I may not live to see the end of this fray,” he said, in a low voice, to Allaster. “ You have been kind to me, and I am grateful as if you had done me a service. If you should ever be so unfortunate as to be a prisoner of war in Prussia, and that you should want a home and friends, give this ring to the Countess Von Steinberg, and tell her that you were kind to her son in his hour of deepest need ; tell her that his last

thought in death was of her;—tell her this, and she will be to you as a mother for my sake.”

“ You will laugh at these forebodings to-night, when I give you back your ring,” said O’Connor.

“ No, my hour is come !” said the deserter, firmly.

The Austrian bugle rang through the air, giving forth the thrilling notes of the charge, as the hussars wheeled round the hill. The Hulans sprang to their horses; long practised in skirmishing warfare, they were mounted in a moment, and made an attempt to form, but before they could fall into their ranks, the hussars poured the fire of their carbines upon the confused mass, and drawing their swords, dashed upon them and through them. The Hulans hesitated—wavered—and were broken into shattered sections. Their lances were useless in close combat, but

their swords were good and they knew how to use them. They fought manfully though hopelessly, although the fire of the hussars had thinned their ranks, and left many a saddle empty.

O'Connor was in the hottest of the fight. The delirious excitement of the charge and the battle was rioting in its full ferocious joy in his bounding pulse ; he received a sharp sabre-cut across his head, returned it by cutting down his enemy,—encountered the captain of the Hulans hand to hand, and disarmed him, shivering his sword with a stroke of his own blade ;—the Hulan fired, and his pistol-bullet cut the epaulette from O'Connor's shoulder ; the sabre of an hussar fell on the Hulan's arm, and effectually disabled him by a severe wound ; the hussar was about to repeat the blow, when O'Connor caught his arm.

“Surrender, Captain,” he cried. The

Hulan looked at his powerless hand, and sullenly delivered the hilt of his sabre to O'Connor.

The fight was short and sharp. About half the Hulans cut their way through the hussars, and setting spurs to their horses swept across the country at a speed which soon carried them far from the scene of action ; the rest of the Hulans remained dead, wounded, or prisoners with the Austrians. The loss of the hussars was very trifling ; that of the Hulans was more severe ; the fire of the hussars accounts sufficiently for the difference in the casualties.

The prisoners were disarmed and formed—the wounded collected, and their hurts dressed as well as time and place would permit. Von Harrach rode up to the village, and pressed some of the trembling and reluctant peasants into the service to bury the dead ; he also seized two or three

carts to carry off the wounded who were too severely hurt to sit their horses. The peasants dug the deep grave; in the neighbourhood of the enemy and on the field no military honours were paid to the dead, but it was a solemn scene, when the clay was thrown over the yet warm and bleeding forms of those who but a moment before were full of life and vigour, and the maddening excitement of the struggle and the victory.

The hussars fell into their ranks, the prisoners were mounted and placed in their due station, the wounded were stretched on straw in the carts, and the column waited silent and motionless for Mackenzie's word of command, when suddenly Von Steinberg advanced, and placed himself full in front of Mackenzie and of the Hulan Captain.

"Hear me, Heinrich von Alten," he said to the Hulan officer.

“No,” said the Hulan, sternly; “no soldier will listen to the voice of a traitor.”

The ashy hue of Von Steinberg’s face grew more lividly white, but he met the look of loathing and scorn which Count von Alten threw upon him with a gaze of steady coldness.

“Count von Alten, bear my words to the camp of your tyrant,” continued the deserter, in a voice which rang through the ranks. “The death of Ziethern, the torture of the soldier, and my degradation, have driven me to despair. I sought revenge—I have found it, and it mocks me. Now see how I mete out justice to the deserter’s crime.”

He snatched a pistol from the holsters of an hussar near him, and ere any hand could interpose, he placed the muzzle between his teeth, pressed the trigger, and fell at the feet of the Hulan and Mackenzie. Neither of them moved a limb—death was but the due meed of desertion.

O'Connor bent over the corpse. The sad, sweet serenity of a painless death sat on the face of the unhappy boy, but the skull was shattered, and a pool of seething blood and brains lay beneath it on the earth. O'Connor sickened at the sight, and turned away.

"He is gone!" he said, in a voice husky with emotion; "he deserved a better fate."

"Let him rest with his comrades," said Mackenzie; and the awe-stricken peasants laid the self-doomed deserter in the last common resting-place of friend and foe, and earth like a mother gathered her contending children into her bosom, and hushed their angry quarrel in the forgetfulness of the last long sleep.

"March! forward!" said Mackenzie, as he struck the spurs into his horse's flanks, and set forth towards Frankenstein.

"Well, Allaster!" said Colonel Gordon,

as he lounged into Allaster's room on the following morning, "how is your head? rather confused, eh! my boy?"

"My bearskin cap would give me a headache, I fancy," said O'Connor; "for the rest, this scratch is nothing to an Irishman, whose skull is made by Dame Nature to stand hard knocks. A clip of an oak stick would hurt one more than a sword."

"For a' that and a' that," said Gordon, "I would back good steel against sprig of shilelagh, any day. We shall lose you for awhile when your head is mended."

"As how, Colonel?"

"Mac mentioned you to the Marshal, who offered to put you on his staff. I accepted it for you, as it will be the very best thing for you in every way."

"Mac is a right good fellow, and I am obliged to him for having recommended me to the notice of the Marshal Count, but

I had rather not take the staff appointment."

"You do not wish to leave us," said Gordon ; "I understand all that, but you must take the staff appointment."

"But I want to see service," said O'Connor.

"You may be sure that old Neuperg is not the man to withdraw from the field a young fellow that he wishes to bring forward. You will see service, never fear ; so get up and wait on the Marshal after dinner."

CHAPTER VIII.

Alas! how changed that gentle mien—

How changed those timid looks have been!

Since days of guilt and of disguise

Have steeled her brow and armed her eyes!

And he the cause for whom were given

Her peace on earth—her hopes in heaven

SCOTT.

LITTLE had as yet been done which apparently influenced the fortunes of the contending nations. Frederick had left Strehlin and taken up a position at Reich-enbach, so as to cover Schweidnitz, where he had formed a fine park of artillery, and

a vast magazine of arms, ammunition, and provisions. The Austrians lay in face of the enemy, Neuperg's head-quarters being at Frankenstein. Their lines, naturally easy of defence, were strengthened by field-works. Their splendid light cavalry, the flower of the wild, and gallant tribes of the Banat and the military frontier, were spread over the country, hovering round the Prussians and harassing them without intermission. Thus in position, the two armies remained for nearly a month, holding each other mutually in check, without venturing upon any decisive action. The same sluggish dilatoriness which had retarded the progress of the war during the first part of the campaign still impeded the movements of the two armies, and the same excessive caution still repressed the baffled ardour of the soldiery.

O'Connor's regiment, being at Frankenstein, he was not deprived of the society of

his brother officers. Though he had joined but so lately, he would have been grieved to part from them. Their frank, free kindness, and their light-hearted merriment gave to their social intercourse a charm unknown to any other society. There is nothing in after-life like the careless, causeless, unreasoning joy of buoyant youth. The successful pursuits of maturer years, and the reserved and guarded intercourse of men in the busy and toiling period of manhood, what are they to the unfettered glee and warm friendships of a soldier's youth ?

At first O'Connor did not dislike his new avocations. The Marshal treated him with particular kindness. Writing despatches and carrying orders filled his time with employment, not indeed quite consonant to his natural tastes ; but as the Count had promised that he should join his regiment whenever it should go into

action, he resigned himself to the duties of the office imposed on him by Colonel Gordon's will, and worked with a quiet zeal, which left no cause for the veteran General to regret his appointment as secretary.

But his dreams of martial glory were at length dispelled. The wild adventure—the maddening excitement of the fight—the proud joy of victory—the toil cheerfully endured to-day in expectation of the triumph of to-morrow,—where were they? The campaign was nearly over; in a few weeks they should go into winter quarters, and as yet he had seen little of service except the dull and weary duty of marching and counter-marching from one village to another, without permanently losing or gaining a league of ground. Was this the life he had anticipated in his boyhood with that burning impatience, which had rendered peace so leaden dull to his chafing spirit? Were his aspirations never to be

realised ? Should Julia Howard never hear his name spoken with honour ? Should he never offer her the homage of his love enriched and enhanced by the well-won meed of praise, which would render that love a treasure worthy of a proud woman's grateful acceptance ? By degrees a languid inertness crept over his spirit : his thoughts lost their manly energy—his iron strength of will relaxed its grasp of life, and life's interests and business ; his very ambition seemed tamed down to a level with the irksome monotonous course of his daily existence. He performed his duty still with quiet patience and minute exactitude, but the depression of his heart became every day more sick and saddening. This mental malady could not long prey on a man whose mind and body were alike so healthy and nobly organized, but while it lasted it was more painful than positive suffering would have been.

His long lonely rides from one post to another along the extended lines became his chief pleasure, and his love for Julia, suppressed for a moment amid the novelty of his military career, regained its former undisputed sway over all his thoughts.

One evening, as he came in from Glatz, he met Mackenzie and Turkheim in the barrack-yard ; Mackenzie quietly enjoying his pipe, Turkheim impatiently pacing the square.

"Have you heard the news, Allaster?" said Mackenzie.

"No, what news?" inquired O'Connor.

"Bartenstein has acknowledged his marriage with Adeline ; it seems he lost all he had, or has, or is ever to have, to her brother, and so he marries the lassie. Puir laddie! he is clean ruined now."

"The gipsey seems to have played her cards well," observed O'Connor, as he dismounted ; "I always expected to see

Bartenstein taken in by some woman, he was so cursedly soft-hearted, so ready to throw away his fortune first, and then to throw himself after it ; but I hardly thought he would have gone to the devil so fast with so little temptation !”

“ The new Countess gives a party to-night,” continued Mackenzie ; “ I’se just gang till it to see her first appearance on the new stage ; will ye gang too, laddie ? and see how Bartenstein bears his misfortune ?”

“ I do not think I can go,” said O’Connor ; “ besides, I never went to her parties before, and I do not like to go to her first party as Countess Bartenstein. For the poor fellow’s sake we must accept the base coin as if it were sterling gold, and treat his Countess with all possible respect.”

“ I dinna ken but ye are right,” muttered Mackenzie, as he sauntered away.

“ At last !” exclaimed Turkheim, in a

low, eager tone ; “ I thought he would never take himself away. I want to speak to you. Come to your rooms, and dismiss your fellow as soon as you can.”

They went together to O'Connor's rooms, and there Turkheim continued to pace the floor with hasty strides, making the windows rattle with his impatient and uneven steps, while Fritz pulled off Allaster's boots.

“ There, Fritz, that will do ; get me some supper directly, and then go to the stable and see that Heinrich makes up Sisko carefully. He is tender on the near fore-foot, so have the shoe removed. Now supper !”

“ Gleich, gleich, mein herr,” said Fritz, and in a moment he brought in the supper, which was received by O'Connor with a right hearty welcome, a long day's work having marvellously well disposed him to

do justice to the baked beef and plums which Fritz had provided.

“Eat, Karl!” said Allaster.

“I have supped,” said Turkheim, who continued to traverse the room, restless, like a wild animal in a cage.

“On dirait a vous voir qu’on vous avait fait avaler bien de coulevres,” observed O’Connor in French. “Well, drink then,” he added in German. “There is a flask of Ausbruch, and some brandy to mend the sweetness of the wine. Take yourself off, Fritz.”

“I am in an infernal scrape,” exclaimed Turkheim, when they were alone. “I wish to heaven I had been as quiet and straight-laced as yourself.”

“Something must be terribly wrong with you, Karl, or the idea of such an extreme measure of reformation could never enter your head.”

“Listen to me, Allaster!” said Turkheim, stamping on the floor in his nervous irritation. “Time is passing; listen to me seriously, for I am on the verge of ruin!”

O'Connor became serious at once, and Turkheim filled himself a goblet of wine, drank it, and then continued more calmly : “You remember Clara Herder?”

“I do; she is too beautiful to be forgotten easily,” replied O'Connor.

“I thought so once,” said Karl, bitterly. “In that confounded hole, Neiss, I had nothing to do, and the devil that tempts idlers threw Clara in my way. I flirted with her at first to spend my vacant hours, but she loved me, and I was drawn on insensibly until I made a fool—a damned fool of myself!”

“Poor Clara!” muttered O'Connor.

“I tell you, Allaster,” said Turkheim, “that I have got into an entanglement

that will end by my cutting my throat, if I find no other means of extricating myself."

"But, Karl," said O'Connor, drily, "I do not see what you have got to trouble you, and to put you into all this fret and fume, when you do not care for the poor girl. You have lost nothing by the affair."

"Allaster, hear me—I must tell you all, for I want your assistance; so I may as well tell it at once, and have done with a confession that seems to blister my lips as I speak it. I married Clara; I deceived her shamefully—basely if you will—for the priest was my groom disguised as an ecclesiastic, and the ceremony was a miserable mockery, which I taught him to recite with solemnity."

"Karl, this is a serious matter!" exclaimed O'Connor; "you went too far."

"I do not want to justify myself; you cannot reproach me more severely than I

Reproach myself; you can say nothing that my own conscience has not said to me.

I despise myself, because from that hour of madness to this present time I have felt fear—a very coward's fear of detection shivering in my heart. Let me tell you what drove me to this deed of guilt.

Just before I met you in Vienna last April, my cousin, Hermann von Waldstein, and some of his mad set, came down to his castle near Hochberg. He is a thorough scamp, a very devil for wildness and extravagance, and yet the best fellow in the world, and the delight and darling of the women. His friends were like himself, and we made a gay time of it. In an evil hour I showed Clara to them. They all acknowledged that she was beautiful; but they would not believe that she loved me; they laughed at me, until I lost my temper,—I drank, and I lost my senses, and then I betted that within a week I would

bring Clara to Waldstein with me. At that time I owed some money to Bartenstein, Gentz, and Sternberg, debts of honour, amounting in all to twenty thousand florins. I had promised that I would pay them before I went to Vienna, and with some difficulty I had extorted the money from my father, who had paid my debts twice before within the twelve months, and who swore that he would not give me another zwanziger for a year. Maddened by wine, and wounded vanity, and the jests of my companions, I betted my very honour on Clara's love, for I staked the twenty thousand florins. That very evening I met Clara at our usual trysting place; I tried my power to the uttermost, and failed; she refused to fly from her home with me. She loved me, her heart was breaking for me, but she was proud and virtuous, and she bade me farewell for ever. I prayed, vowed, implored, tried

the hacknied threat of suicide, but all was vain. The lurking devil in my breast whispered his scheme of treachery, ruin, dishonour; the jeers of my companions at Waldstein, the contempt and astonishment of my brother officers at my broken word of honour, all rose up before me, stared me in the face. I grasped the hope suggested me by my very despair, and told Clara that I would marry her if she would swear to obey me in everything, and to conceal our marriage until I should permit her to confess it. She hesitated, for she loved her father; I pleaded with all the eloquence of passion and despair, she yielded, for she loved me. I need not tell you how I carried my plan into execution, nor how I surrounded my crime with every precaution which could shroud it from detection. I need not repeat the tale I told Clara of my father's sternness and of my dependence on him; I need

not tell you what pretexts we devised to evade the fond vigilance of her father while I led my victim to Waldstein. It is enough to tell you that I showed her there, and won my fatal bet, and then, ere the whispers or the looks of the guests of Count Waldstein could excite suspicion in that innocent and candid girl, I hurried her away. Even then I feared her ; yes, I, who had often looked death in the face on the field, I quailed as a guilty thing ; I crouched like a worm before the pure glad smile of that village girl ; I trembled, for I had wronged her !”

“I pity you from my soul, Karl,” said O’Connor ; “but what can I do for you ? Yet you say you want my assistance.”

Turkheim again filled his goblet, and drained it at a draught.

“Clara is here ; she came to my quarters to-night, and claimed my protection ; she calls on me to acknowledge her mar-

riage. Her father wishes her to marry some jaeger to whom she was betrothed before I met her, and she has fled to avoid this marriage. I dare not confess my treachery. Go to her—tell her all—say I can never see her more. I am rich now since my father's death ; offer her half my fortune ; tell her that I will provide nobly for her child if she will conceal its birth ; but at all cost set me free. If Sternberg hears of this wretched business, he will make his sister dissolve our engagement.”

“And you yet love Countess Ottilie ?” asked O'Connor, thoughtfully.

“More than my life ; I have loved her for two years ; she is the only woman I ever loved. I would rather die than lose her !”

A smile of melancholy pride passed over the calm and beautiful face of Alaster. He felt how superior he himself

was to others, his steady love, his holy truth, his unswerving adherence to his fathers, his unsullied fidelity to Julia, shone before his own soul as a light from heaven.

"I do not like the task you want to fix on me," he said; "cannot you speak to the poor girl yourself? why practise needless cruelty to her?"

"I dare not meet her," muttered Karl; "I have seen her—~~she~~ ^{one} would not hear me—yes, it must out—I fear her—she is madly violent."

"Well, if I must go, I must," said O'Connor, with the air of a man who had made up his mind to a vexatious necessity; "I will try to persuade her to return to her home, or, at least, to seek some more fitting asylum than your quarters."

"Tell her that I conjure her to marry the Jaeger; by a little caution and some

address she can conceal everything from him. I shall be more happy when I know that she has found a peaceful home."

"No, Karl, no," said Allaster; "I will not seek to persuade Clara to marry the Jaeger. I will not urge her to inflict on any man a wrong which I, were it done to myself, would wash out in blood, and deem the penalty scarcely equal to the offence. The peasant has feelings as deep and true as ours; the jealousy of love and honour burns beneath the grey blouse as fiercely as beneath our embroidered dolmans. If I am to manage this business for you, I must have my own way in it."

"Act as you will, do anything, promise anything for me, but lose no time," said Turkheim. "My honour and my life and my love are in your hand. My servant is on guard in the ante-room, but I have told him to admit you. Go, Allaster, mein bester, go!"

Allaster involuntarily smiled at this eager, self-abandoning dependence with which Turkheim implored his aid. It seemed like weakness to the stern and self-relying spirit of the mountain chieftain. However, he yielded to his friend's urgent entreaties, and sought poor Clara Herder. There were no candles in Turkheim's room, but the wood fire in the open stove flung a red and fitful radiance around.

Clara was crouched beside the stove; her head rested on her knees, with her forehead pressed in her clasped hands, and her long hair unbraided, and hung like a veil over her form. When she heard O'Connor's footstep, she raised her head, and gazed on him with a look of inquiring anguish.

"It is not he!" she muttered, and once more bowed her head, as if soul and body

were alike crushed to the dust beneath the weight of shame and sorrow.

O'Connor gazed on the victim of Turkheim's thoughtless folly with pity and regretful manly tenderness for her helpless and unprotected innocence. How changed she was since the day when he had seen her sitting in the hop garden with her false lover at her feet! The blight had fallen on the sweet field-flower. Her form was wasted from its rounded symmetry, her cheek was thin and white, and her large eyes were surrounded by dark livid circles, which made the paleness of her cheek appear yet more wan.

"Where is Karl?" she exclaimed, abruptly, while Allaster stood in silence gazing on the wreck of so much beauty.

"He has sent me to you," replied O'Connor. "Believe me, clärchen, this is no place for you. You must allow me to take you hence. Karl has told me all ;

you cannot reproach him more bitterly than he reproaches himself ; he curses the madness which led him to wrong you ; he implores you to allow him to atone for his error by—”

“Gold !” interrupted Clara, bitterly ; “gold—yes, he told me this ; he said he would provide nobly for me ; a little gold, he thinks, will pay the peasant girl for her honour, her peace, her happiness. You, too, think this, and you come like him to bargain and to barter with her for her life.”

“I do not come to insult you with the offer of gold ; I know you would not accept such sordid compromise. I come to take you hence. By the memory of all you have lost I appeal to you, and I entreat you to follow me. Every hour you spend here now will but add remorse to sorrow.”

“Whither can I go ?” she said, in a hollow, choking tone.

“There is a quiet little inn here in the town. I will take you thither for this night, and to-morrow I will restore you to your father.”

“Am I still his child?” exclaimed Clara wildly. “I have deceived him; I am not worthy to dwell beneath his roof. Shall I confess my shame, and break my mother’s heart? or shall I marry Johann with dishonour for my marriage portion?”

“Shame and dishonour can never fall on you, Clara; they rest with your betrayer. I will lead you to your father; I will repeat Turkheim’s confession, and he will receive you, and take you to his hearth and his heart. I do not ask you to marry Johann. Live alone and free, and Turkheim will provide for you and your child with a generosity which is only justice.”

“Have mercy on me!” she exclaimed. “Do not lead me from the only home where I have a right to find shelter.”

Speak for me to Karl—entreat him not to cast me from him. He alone has not a right to despise me—he alone of all the world can believe that I am not wanton and vile. I do not hope to keep his love, but let him endure my presence.”

“Clärchen, it cannot be,” said Allaster, who felt thoroughly ashamed of the part he was acting,—so ashamed that his eyes sunk before the glance of Clara, and he could scarcely find a few cold constrained words to answer her heartfelt pleading.

“Let me see him once more,” she exclaimed. “See, I am calm—I will be calm as death—I will smile, and not even look reproachfully ; only let me see him. What have I done to you that you try to tear me from him, and to break my heart ?”

She threw herself on her knees and caught Allaster’s hand. She wept bit-

terly : in the violence of her sobbing he could feel the convulsive throbbing of her heart, and his hand was wet with her tears. He felt more and more embarrassed, more humbled every moment, and he became angry with himself ; and this increased the painful awkwardness of his position. A cold dispassionate spectator always seems weak and powerless when called on to contend with the impassioned being whose all of life and hope is on the hazard of the stake ; but far more weak is he who is obliged to advocate a friend whom he, at the secret bar of his conscience, must condemn, and to make offers which revolt him while he urges them. O'Connor almost loathed himself for the share he was taking in Turkheim's desertion of the woman he had betrayed to shame and anguish of heart. He gently raised Clara, placed her on a chair, and opening the door a little, desired Turk-

heim's man, who was standing sentry in the ante-room, to bring lights.

"Let me see him once more," said Clara; "let me appeal to his mercy, and if I kneel and sue in vain, I will bow my head and depart."

She buried her face in her hands and spoke no more, but the shivering of her whole frame, and the low moaning murmurs of complaint which broke from her lips, betrayed the keen sense of pain which she retained even in that utter exhaustion of body and mind.

The servant brought in a lamp, and some biscuits and wine; perhaps he thought that Clara required some food. O'Connor took a glass of wine and held it to the girl's quivering lips, but she impatiently and feebly pushed it away.

"Karl, Karl, nothing but Karl!" she murmured.

"Remain here. Let no one enter that

room," said O'Connor to the servant, as he passed through the outer apartment on his way to his own rooms.

"Turkheim," he said, "you must come with me. I cannot drag the girl away from you ; you cannot expect that I will act the part of an executioner or a butcher for you. She says she must see you ; be a man, and dare to look on what you have dared to do."

"There is no use in my seeing her," said Turkheim ; "you will take care of her. To meet her now would only inflict fresh suffering on both of us."

"Selfish always!" muttered O'Connor angrily between his set teeth. "To meet her now may inflict some annoyance on you, but nothing can cause her another pang. The scene must end ; the girl must be removed from your quarters, and she will not go until you see her. So come with me, and let us make an end of it. I

tell you, Karl, that had I known the torture I should witness, I would not have gone on the damned humiliating errand on which you sent me. I stood before that weak, defenceless girl like a criminal, and though I only acted for another, I quailed before the majesty of outraged innocence. Come !”

He took Turkheim’s arm and hurried him along. Karl seemed to have lost all energy, and even the power of volition ; he passively yielded to the direction given to his movements by O’Connor’s arm.

While O’Connor had been absent, Turkheim had sought an opiate or a stimulant in the wine-flask which stood on O’Connor’s supper-table, and a heavy dull intoxication had begun to blunt all his perceptions.

Clara sat still in the same attitude of drooping hopeless despondency in which O’Connor had left her ; but when she

heard the sound of Karl's footstep, she started up, his bare presence roused her to life as if by an electric shock. Ere he could prevent her, she was kneeling at his feet, her hands clasped in supplication, and her eyes raised to his, their tears dried away, and their blue orbs dilating in their eager inquiring gaze. He strove to raise her, but in vain.

“No, no,” she cried, in a sharp thrilling tone; “have mercy on me, or let me die at your feet.”

“Clara, dear Clara, it is I who should kneel and grovel at your feet for pardon; would to Heaven I had left you as I found you.”

“That is past now; I forgive you,” she said, eagerly catching at the faint hope which his remorseful sorrow seemed to hold out to her. “Send me not from you now. I have no home but in your presence. The deceit you made me practise

seems to have withered the love I once bore to my father and mother ; while I deceived them I loved them less. And now, since you told me all—since you spoke those dreadful words, I have lived in misery such as you cannot dream of. When my father's face looked gloomy, I felt my heart sickening with the fear that he had discovered my treachery and falsehood ; when my name was called suddenly, I started with the dread of hearing the accusation of my shame. Karl, cast me not off now, when I have nothing on earth but you ; no friend, no shelter where I could lay down my head to die."

"This is hell to me !" cried Turkheim, as he struck his clenched hands on his brow. "Speak to her, Allaster ; tell her that she asks what is impossible."

O'Connor remained silent.

"Clärchen, I will provide for you ; I will provide nobly for your child. I will

find you a home where you will live honoured and happy, where my crime will be unknown, and where the stain of it will not fall on your fair fame. I will see you often—I will watch over your child—but I cannot keep you near me. Your presence would cause my ruin, and you would not wish to be the destroyer of all my hopes in life.” *Since I have been here*

“Your ruin—your destroyer!” shrieked the girl. She sprang to her feet, and a deep flush rushed over the ghastly paleness of her cheek. “What, then, have you been to me? Speak, as you shall speak hereafter before God and all creation—speak! Say why do you fling me away, when you have robbed me of home, hope, fame,—everything except life to feel my misery?”

“I am betrothed to another; in a month I shall be married to her,” said Turkheim. He wished to terminate this scene of boot-

less suffering, and he struck this last decisive blow, though he trembled when he did so.

“ Then you have betrayed me to ruin without even the poor excuse of love,” retorted Clara. A change passed over her ; her drooping form rose to its full height, and grew rigid as iron ; her quivering lip curled, and fixed in steady defiance ; and a deep deadly hatred spoke in the glittering of her eyes and the knitting of her brow. The sorrowing angel was changed to a demon. Turkheim cowered, and his eyes fell before her gaze. She laid her hand heavily on his head, as if she would crush him to the dust ; there was a terrible strength in that frail white arm.

“ Hear me !” she said, in a hoarse deep voice ; “ may the woman you love abhor you—may she dishonour your name—may she love your bitterest enemy—may your sons die in the cradle, or live to tear your

heart, and embitter your dying hour—may your daughters be what you have made me—may heaven be shut against your last cry for mercy, and may the memory of my destruction dog your soul in hell !”

She darted out of the room.

“Follow her, Allaster !” cried Turkheim, who stood rooted to the spot where she had left him.

O'Connor waited not for his desire. He had followed Clara with a step as fleet as her own, but he could not detain her ; she had passed the sentries with the headlong spring of a hunted wolf, and was lost to his pursuit in the narrow winding streets of Frankenstein.

CHAPTER IX.

In she plunged boldly,
No matter how coldly
The rough river ran ;
Over the brink of it,
Picture it—think of it,
Dissolute man !

THOMAS HOOD.

O'CONNOR spent the greater part of the night with Turkheim, who endured all the misery of unrepentant remorse. The still small voice of conscience in his breast muttered a deep echo to the malediction of Clara Herder ; the altered aspect and

blighted form of her who so lately bloomed in the dewy prime of youth, and the freshness of beauty, rose up accusingly before him ; the wild accents of her wail for her lost honour and forfeit happiness, rang on his ear more thrillingly than even the curse she had pronounced on himself. Fearful forebodings of the doom to which she might rush in her frenzy of despair haunted him with terrible anticipations—but yet he wavered not in his determination. He had more than life to preserve—his love and his honour were at stake. If he acknowledged Clara's claim on him, or if she could prove her accusation, he should be convicted of having unfairly won his bet from Count Waldstein, and Ottilie were lost to him for ever. He would do all—bear all—sacrifice life and soul rather than make the damning confession of his infamy, and place an impassable barrier between him and Countess Zichy. He

drank deep to escape from his misery ; when Allaster attempted to leave him, he implored him to remain a little longer. All his energy seemed concentrated in his resolution to resist to the last the disgraceful exposure that threatened him ; but for everything else he seemed to have become helplessly weak, and he clung to Allaster for aid and sympathy, with an almost morbid feeling of dependence.

“ Good night, Karl,” said Allaster at length ; “ you must be a man : the thing is irrevocable—it is done and over ; to meet and bear the consequences is all you have now to do, and you will want all your nerve and prudence for that purpose. Do not yield to this miserable despondency ; and above all, do not gulp down the brandy at this rate.”

“ I think I shall go mad,” replied Turkheim ; “ my brain is on fire already, and yet the brandy cannot raise my

"spirits." He extended his hand towards the flask, but O'Connor snatched it from him.

"This will never do!" said Allaster impatiently; as striking the bottle against the stove he shattered it to pieces. "Go to bed; sleep if you can, and trust me with the care of Clärchen's safety. All that man can do, I will do, to save her from farther sorrow."

Turkheim fixed his swimming eyes on the bold frank brow of O'Connor, and strove to read his thoughts.

"I see what you are thinking of just now," said Allaster, and a slight scornful smile for a moment flitted over his curling lip, though Karl, whose perceptions were deadened by growing intoxication, did not observe it,— "I see what you are thinking of, but you must not hope to catch me falling into that pitfall. I guide my course in life by a bright particular star,

and I follow no man's footsteps. Good night, Karl."

Neuperg had occupied Patschkau to maintain his communication with Neiss, and with all the rich country covered by that important fortress. O'Connor had received the Marshal's order to visit Patschkau, and to inspect the small detachment posted there. At an early hour on the following day he prepared for his ride. He had visited Turkheim, and finding him asleep, hoped that he would awake with so much of his senses about him as would serve him on parade, to save him from the comments or conjectures of his comrades, and from the censure of the Colonel. Fritz had undertaken to trace Clara to her retreat, wherever she might have concealed herself, and was ready to set forth on the search, aided by Turkheim's servant, who was urged to exertion by the remembrance of the part he had played in the guilty

farce of which she was the victim. Having thus taken measures for the discharge of the duty he had assumed to himself, Allaster sprang into his saddle with all the brisk cheerful consciousness of life and health, which one seems to drink in with the very air one breathes in the fresh dawn of a fine day. He hailed this feeling of hopeful buoyancy as an indication of his recovery from the morbid state of causeless depression of spirit which he had endured for some time previous to Turkheim's affair.

From Patschkau he sent an orderly with his despatches to Neiss. The officers asked him to dine with them ; they were pleasant gentlemanly fellows, the wine was good, and a merrier set never sent the flask round a mess-table. It was evening before O'Connor either could or would break up the party. Tho direct road to Frankenstein, a distance of fifteen miles,

lay across a wide plain of unfenced fields, and was a deep sandy tract ; the other route by Wartha was longer, but it was a hard highland road, winding among the spurs of the Riesengebirge, which there shut in the narrowing valley of the Neiss.

The sun was setting when he entered the romantic gorge of the Wartha pass, where the Neiss, yet untamed, full and recent from its source, rushes foaming along its rocky bed with the speed and the roar of a mountain torrent. A twilight shade, deepened by the shade of the pine-woods and of the beetling cliffs, lay upon his path. The light of the sinking sun retreated from the valley, until the peak of the Wartberg alone retained a last lingering beam of the departing orb of day. The small chapel which crowns the Wartberg, and is held in reverence by the credulous piety of the mountain peasants, stood out against the cloudless sky, flushed

with the rosy light. O'Connor's eyes and his thoughts were spell-bound in rapt admiration ; but even as he gazed the gorgeous hues paled from the landscape, a soft purple tint stole like a transparent veil over the scene, and then the russet grey of evening settled upon all, and the light and life of nature passed away together. The spell which bound O'Connor's thoughts vanished with the evanescent radiance which had cast it on them ; they were set free, and soon they wandered away far from the giant mountains ; he forgot the wild revel of the bivouac, and his gay gallant comrades of the barrack and the tent. Truant memory flew back to his forfeited home beyond the seas, and his thoughts evoked, in their silent and heartfelt worship, the image of his first and only love. He rode on in a musing reverie—the past, the present, and the future—hope, regret, and memory blending in his mind, and filling his breast

with feelings at once soothing and mournful.

The little town of Wartha slept in the stillness of the hour as he rode through it at a steady trot, the tramp of his Sicilian rousing only some watch-dog, which bayed for a moment in menacing challenge of the intruder. As he advanced, the moon rose over the inaccessible heights of the Silberberg, pouring her white, deceptive light on his path. He had ascended a long eminence, and having gained the summit, he saw that the descent was more steep and rugged, affording but unsafe footing for a horse. With a sportsman's consideration for his mare, he dismounted, and drawing the rein over his arm, walked slowly down the rocky road. Beneath him lay a little glen, where a few old gnarled trees flung their fantastic shadows across the moonlight sleeping on the grassy turf. He heard the murmur of

water, rising and dying alternately with the sighing of the night air, and he could see here and there the silver line of the stream winding its way to the Neiss. His road crossed the bed of the stream at the foot of a dam constructed apparently for the purpose of floating timber. The broad shallow sheet of water fell over the low embankment, glittering like liquid glass in the moonbeam, and above the dam the deep dark pond lay within its fringe of willows, whose feathery boughs trailed in the eddies of the impeded stream. He put his foot into the stirrup to mount the Sicilian, but as he did so she started back, almost dragging the rein from his grasp, and plunging fiercely.

“You little fool, do you see the Erl King?” he said soothingly, while he turned his head to discover the cause of her fright. A form glided through the willows, noiselessly as if it were but a

wreath of white mist. It stood on the bank of the pond. The idea of suicide does not naturally present itself to the mind of an Irishman ; his strong instinctive love of the life to which he owes all the pleasures which he enjoys with such keen healthy relish, and his deep-rooted religious principles, alike render self-destruction abhorrent to his nature. Allaster resembled all his countrymen in this. He gazed curiously on the figure, which appeared to him indistinct in the obscurity, without anticipating the purpose of its presence there at such an hour. There was a heavy plash in the water—the gurgling of the waves closing over their self-devoted prey—a moment's silence—and then a woman's shriek. Allaster cast loose the rein on the mare's neck. To spring on the dam, and to fling off his sword and dolman, occupied but a moment too brief for thought to measure.

He gazed into the pool where the circling waves were yet spreading to the banks. A white spot appeared on the surface—it sank—again a gasping cry—a smothered cry of agony. He threw himself into the water. A sharp spasm of pain told him that he had struck against a sunken log, but he swam strongly in spite of that, and reached the centre of the pool just as the woman rose again in the death struggle. He seized her, and bore her to the shore ; fortunately she was insensible, so that she could not fold him in the fatal grasp. He gained the bank, and laid her on the grass, but there his strength failed, and he sank down by her side—overcome by the sick faintness of pain. The moonlit sky, the earth, the water, floated before his eyes ; they mingled, whirled, blended in fantastic chaos—then all was darkness, and for a moment he felt no more.

This faintness could not long unnerve his iron frame, so full of powerful vitality. Sense returned, and with reviving consciousness came the dizziness of pain, and the shivering chill which follows loss of blood. For a moment he could not remember what had occurred to him, but in a few minutes his memory recalled all the circumstances of his adventure. A violent constrictive pain in his chest rendered his respiration difficult. The blood was pouring fast down his face from a wound on his head. He bound his handkerchief round his forehead to staunch the bleeding, and then turned all his attention to the woman he had rescued from the cold depth of the wave. He raised her head on his knee, parted the hair on her pallid brow, and saw the deathlike, but yet beautiful face of Clara Herder.

"God forgive you, Karl!" he muttered, while he chafed her brow and her hands,

and wrung the water from her clothes, and, in short, did all he could to restore her to consciousness. The evaporation of the water from her clothes contributed to increase the icy coldness of her inanimate form. He remembered that his cloak was strapped to his saddle. A word and a whistle brought Sissy to his side. He wrapped the cloak round Clara, so as to check the evaporation. He laid his hand on her bosom; it was cold as marble, but he fancied that he could feel a faint pulse trembling into life at her heart. Encouraged by this hope, he continued his unskilful but anxious efforts to restore the suspended animation, and soon a faint sigh from the lips of the unhappy girl rewarded his cares. She opened her eyes, and gazed around with a vacant stare, and again her head sank on his knee, and her eyelids closed in recurring insensibility. Allas-

should not have word and deed.

ter's fears began to predominate over his hopes.

He drew from his sabretashe the small wicker-covered flask which, like most of the hussars, he generally carried, and held it to her lips, until he made her swallow a few drops of the cherry-brandy which it contained. It revived her more than all his exertions for her resuscitation. She sat up, and then leaned upon his breast, while she feebly strove to clasp her arms round him.

"My Karl—my heart's treasure, you will not part from me!" she murmured.

O'Connor did not speak; he feared to break the dream of illusory happiness which seemed to allure her back to life. He felt, as he sat supporting her, that the cold of the autumnal night was freezing the very blood in his veins, and, raising the flask to his lips, he drank a deep welcome draught.

“Come, Clara!” he said, in a tone of cheerful command; “come, Clara! you must exert yourself. Get up!” He assisted her to rise. She knew him, and a moan of hopeless misery burst from her lips as she strove to obey him, but she was still so weak that she could scarcely cling to his arm for support. He made her drink a few drops of the kirschwasser. The cordial revived her. With some difficulty, and not without suffering extreme pain at his chest, he lifted her into the saddle, and then, while he supported her with one arm, he led the Sicilian into the road, and walking by her side, took the road to Frankenstein.

“Why did you save me?” said Clara, abruptly, and in a harsh, jarring tone.

“I saved you to repent of this rash deed, and to atone for it by a life of courageous endurance,” replied Allaster, firmly, though he felt his heart softening with a pity

which he would not betray lest it should encourage her to give way to her grief. He dreaded a paroxysm of lamentation and tears. "Tell me, Clara, how came you here?"

"I do not know," she said, and she gasped for breath as she spoke. "I wandered about ever since I left Karl's room. How long is it since then? I think I know, and yet it seems like a far-off time. I had hope then. This day, alone in that wood I lay down to die, but I could not die. Why did you not leave me in peace in the water? I want to die—I cannot live."

"Clara, can you rob your father of his child?" said O'Connor.

Clara spoke no more; she sank into a dull strange apathy, obeying O'Connor with stupid submission, but seeming neither to feel joy nor regret for her deliverance from death. The horrible resolution

which she had so nearly carried into execution had, as it were, severed her from all the interests of this world.

Allaster, too, was silent. He knew that words of comfort would fall without meaning on her ear. The shock was too recent, the grief too acute, to be alleviated by mere argument. As he walked slowly on beside her, he felt the wound on his head becoming more painful as it grew stiff; the sharp lancinating pain in his chest impeded his free breathing, and seemed to compress his breast as if with a burning band. Every moment the hot salt blood rose bubbling in his throat and filled his mouth. Every step he took, every breath he drew, increased his sufferings; and the four miles he was obliged to walk seemed to him, in his utter weariness, to be interminably lengthened. At length the welcome rays of a few late lights yet twinkling from some of the houses of Franken-

stein greeted his eyes with the cheering promise of rest and shelter for Clara and himself.

He stopped at the door of a small inn on the outskirts of the town, and having, by good fortune, found the hostess still a-foot, he committed Clara to her care. The frau, a good-humoured motherly body, received the poor girl with kindness, and heard the little O'Connor chose to tell of her story with wondering pity, and a hundred exclamations of compassion. Reaching his quarters, Allaster found Fritz in extreme disquietude at his prolonged absence.

"Guter himmel, gnadiger Herr, you are wet through!" exclaimed Fritz, as Allaster threw him the rein.

"Make up Sissy," said O'Connor, "and then bring me some coffee, if you can make it at this hour."

"You will find supper in your room,"

said Fritz, "and coffee on the stove, which I lighted, thinking you might like a fire. Captain Mackenzie is waiting for you."

"Weel, weel, there ye are safe and sound," said Mackenzie, greeting him as he entered his room; "yon daft callant Fritz wad fain hae frightened me anent your outstaying. But I say, man, how come ye sae droukit hame? were ye mistrysted with a kelpie?"

"I was fishing a woman out of a river, and have suffered in the service," said O'Connor, pointing to his bandaged brow.

"The doctor must see you to-morrow, or rather to-day, for it is one o'clock. Who is the woman ye fished out of the river? and how came she to time her achievement so nicely with your presence? I doubt, laddie, that the lassie's gude name will want a washing, though ye begin the affair with a dip. Ye were ae making be-

lieve ye were a douce wise man ; but for a' that and a' that, ye have young bluid and het in ye're veins."

"The secret, for secret there is, is none of mine," said O'Connor ; "but tell me how I find you here, Mac, you that never willingly hear the chimes after midnight?"

"From what Fritz said I was anxious about you, so I just daidled in here to wait for ye. Good night ; I'll bring the anatomist to see ye the day."

The cynic took himself off to his crib. O'Connor could not eat, but he drank some coffee, and threw himself into his bed, where he soon forgot both pain and weariness in the deep sleep of youth.

CHAPTER X.

I woke—where was I?

MAZEPPA.

TURKHEIM was at O'Connor's bedside before he woke. O'Connor's first words on waking communicated the intelligence of Clara's involuntary escape from the guilty and abhorrent death of a suicide. A fearful load of remorse was removed from Karl's mind. O'Connor urged him to take Mackenzie into their council.

"You see," he argued, "Mac already suspects me, and when he once starts in chase of a secret, his acuteness will soon

puzzle out the true scent. Better have him on our side than encounter his caustic jibes. If he find out your story by his own mother wit, he will consider it his own property, and look on you as fair game for his sarcasm."

Mackenzie was accordingly admitted to the conclave. He heard Turkheim's self-accusing narrative with a look of grave concern, and a certain knitting of the shaggy brows over the deepset grey eyes which was ominous of bitter animadversions. However, Karl escaped better than he expected.

"I am sorry, Karl," said the Scot, "that you have wronged the maiden. The man that first deceives an innocent trusting girl opens a heavy account against his final reckoning;—all her future errors are chargeable to him. But there is no use in sermonizing; O'Connor is laid up for some time I am thinking, so I will go and

“look after the girl, and, in the meantime, do you take care of O’Connor, who has suffered for your sins.”

The surgeon came in at the moment to re-examine Allaster’s hurts.

“I am off!” cried Mac; “I never could bear the sight of Stilling’s carving-knives.”

“There is no carving required here,” said the military Galen, as he removed the bandage from O’Connor’s head and examined his swollen discoloured breast.

“This wound on the head is nothing, it is not so bad as the Hulan’s handiwork. What is that?” he added, as he saw the blood soaking through the handkerchief which O’Connor held to his mouth; “ha! this contusion on your breast has caused severe internal injuries—you have three ribs broken.”

“Is he dangerously hurt?” inquired one of the Iroquois.

Turkheim, whose feelings at the moment were far from enviable.

“Not dangerously,” said Stilling, gravely, “but severely. Why, man, you are a fortune for a practitioner, a walking hospital in your proper person. Here is now the third time you have come back to my charge within two months.”

“How long am I to remain here?” inquired O’Connor, who began to fear that he was really unable to perform his duty.

“My dear fellow, you will hardly see the end of the campaign, unless we go into winter quarters much later than usual this year.”

Stilling’s forebodings touching the probable consequences of O’Connor’s hurts were verified to the letter. Days and weeks elapsed ere he rose from his feverish couch. The gun-shot wound in his arm re-opened ; the grave injuries he had

received ; the debilitating effects of cold, fatigue, and loss of blood, all conspired to throw him into lingering fever. Stillings' care was unremitting ; but even his skill and kindness were unable to hasten the slow and fitful progress of O'Connor's recovery.

Turkheim, who looked upon himself as in some measure the cause of his friend's sufferings, watched over him with untiring and sedulous attention, such as only remorse could extort from the impatience of manhood. And Mackenzie too, cynic and stoic as he was, shared in the vigil of soldierly friendship, for O'Connor had found out the soft corner of his stern heart, and like himself, alone in a strange land, was unto him even as a brother.

At length the crisis of the fever was past, the delirium ceased, the tense and throbbing pulses lost their febrile velocity ; but still no less requisite was the care of

friends in the prostration of every mental and bodily faculty. In a few days, however, youth began to exert its restorative beneficent power, the full fresh tide of life flowed back into his breast, and with returning health reviving memory returned. His recollections of recent events, at first all tangled and distorted, grew clearer and more clear, and he soon experienced an awakening curiosity to hear the sequel of his adventure.

It was a fine autumnal evening. O'Connor lay musing on the fate of the unfortunate girl he had torn from the embrace of death, and saved from that guilt which alone appears, to mortal judgment, placed beyond the pale of heavenly mercy. The languid thrill of convalescence was in his veins, diffusing through his whole being those strangely voluptuous sensations of mingling pleasure and lassitude which accompany recovery from long illness. The

dewy air from the open window fanned his brow and wooed his lip with its invisible caresses. The little garden beneath his window looked fair in the golden and crimson hues of autumn ; the sounds of busy life from the streets, mellowed by distance, came to his ear with a soothing murmur. A shade fled over the gorgeous sky ; the leaves of the tufted shrubs rustled in the passing wind ; a short sunny shower, bright as the tears which laughter brings to the eyes, poured its big drops on the warm earth ; it ceased ; the wet leaves glittered in the westering sun, and the birds, silenced a moment, once more, carolled their joyous vespers. Alaster watched all this with quiet pleasure, and enjoyed it as if it were the first time he had seen such an evening. He felt as if nature were a sister whom he had met after a long separation.

A slight noise attracted O'Connor's at-

tention to the other side of the room. Fritz, with a pen in his hand and a letter before him, sat at a table, his glance wandering with anxious watchfulness from the half-written page to the face of his master. He came to the bedside when he saw that Allaster was awake.

“Where am I, Fritz? this is not my barrack-room,” said O’Connor.

“Bewahre, nein!” answered the boy. “The doctor wanted more air than the kennel yonder afforded, and so, the Marshal ordered us to bring you to his own quarters in this house, which belongs to the Burgomaster. The young Herr Graf gave up this room for you.”

“Who are you writing to, Fritz?”

“To Fraulein Alma, mein herr. I must write to her every day. The General wrote to me twice, and sent me a thousand florins, so I got on famously.”

“My true-hearted old uncle!” muttered

O'Connor ; but another form then glided before his soul, and Alma was not remembered. He thought of Julia, far from the land where he lived, but ever present to his heart, even in the fierce frenzy of fever.

At that moment Turkheim came in.

"I see you are all right now, Allaster !" he cried, as he gave an inquiring look at the pale but calm face of Allaster ; "you know me at last."

"Lieber Karl," said O'Connor, "I am able to thank you for your kindness ; no, not able, but willing, my boy. My head is none of the clearest as yet, but I can remember that you were never absent when I wanted a hand to smooth my pillow."

"Mac was as attentive to you as I was," said Turkheim, "and that without being like me the cause of your illness.

"It is strange how I get into scrapes."

said Allaster ; “ I am an unlucky dog after all. If I were as wild as a hawk, I could scarcely meet with more adventures.”

“ And I still the cause,” observed Karl ; “ even in your affair with Stanley I was the cause.”

“ I am not sorry for my escapade at Vienna,” said Allaster ; “ sooner or later a man must fight, and he is lucky if he gain anything by it except a character. I got another friend by my affair with Stanley ; I really like him—he is a right good fellow, with a true heart and a noble spirit, hidden by his frippery affectation of fashion and of sublime indifference.”

“ You like Stanley !” said Turkheim, bitterly. “ He has gained all—friend and mistress—and I have lost all.”

“ Come, Karl,” said O’Connor, “ though I like Stanley, he has not won your friend from you. No drawing-room friendship

can equal the brotherly love of soldiers like us."

He wrung Turkheim's hand in the grasp of manly friendship.

Turkheim turned to the light, and for the first time O'Connor observed the change which had passed over his comrade.

"You are ill, Karl!" said O'Connor.

"Not ill, but miserable," replied Turkheim. "Life has now no value or significance for me. But you are yet too weak to listen to my story; and besides, when I allow myself to think of my lost happiness, I am unmanned to every woman's weakness."

"Tell me all, Karl! Is Clara dead?"

"She lives!" said Turkheim, impatiently; "all that fine tragedy of despair is played out, and Mackenzie has settled the matter with her father. She is gone home, and I am to pay them five hundred ducats a year for Clara's life; if her child

should be a son, I am to get him a commission, and push him in the army ; if a girl, I am to give her a dowry on her marriage. Mackenzie arranged all this, and I have purchased my liberty dog cheap, for since my father's death I am rich. But what avails wealth to me now ? what care I for my liberty ? Otilie is lost to me for ever. Oh, I could curse myself and that girl, whose credulous folly and blind wanton abandonment to my will has blasted all my hopes ! I was scarcely to blame after all ; necessity and temptation were too powerful for me ; but what man could resist their combined force ?”

O'Connor was silent. He would not speak in terms of harsh reproach to Turkheim, whose haggard face betrayed intense suffering ; nor would he soothe him by uttering one word of the common cant of society, which exonerates the betrayer by flinging the anathema on the head of the victim.

“Sternberg discovered this miserable business,” continued Karl von Turkheim: “he wrote it to Ottilie. If he were not her brother, I would soon teach him to abstain from meddling with my affairs. She sent me back my letters, and, without a word of regret or reproach, she bade me farewell for ever. If she had betrayed anger or jealousy, I might still hope for pardon; but her few cold words of calm contempt have killed every hope in my breast. You cannot guess what I have felt for the last few days—you cannot know what is the torture of wounded pride and rejected love.”

“In this at least we are brothers, Karl,” said O’Connor, much affected by the broken-hearted tone of the dispirited soldier. “I, too, have loved for years. I love with a consuming passion which triumphs over time, and burns on unextinguished by absence. Now you know why

my heart is cold as polar ice to every allure-
ment of pleasure. But, Karl, I do not
despair; I have willed that she shall be
mine; for her I endure the burning tor-
ture of smothered passion. I live but for
the woman I love, and nothing but death
can destroy the hope of possessing her.
Love like me and hope like me, and the
strength of will may conquer every obstacle
in your way."

"It is vain to speak of hope to me.
I have lost Ottilie," said Turkheim. "I
must force my thoughts away from this
forbidden topic."

"What is Neuperg doing?" inquired
O'Connor; "I know nothing of the history
of the last few weeks. So tell me what
has been done, and what is to be done."

"All is done and over," said Turkheim;
"on the eleventh of last month the Prus-
sians attempted to cross the Neiss at
Woitz, but they were defeated in this ob-

ject by the Marshal, who threw all our cavalry, by a night march, upon the river at the point where Frederick had established his pontoon-bridge. The King would not expose the Berlin parade to be cut off in detail, by crossing in the face of our force, so he retreated to Michelau, where he crossed on the 27th."

"Then Upper Silesia is at his mercy!" exclaimed Allaster.

"True—too true!" said Turkheim; "but this is not the whole sum of our losses. The Elector and Belleisle have occupied Ling—they even menace Vienna. Lord Hyndford and Robinson have urged the Queen to make peace with Frederick, and thus to break up the confederacy of her enemies. The danger of the capital has extorted her consent, and though she has opened some negotiations, she has not yet acceded to Frederick's demands. Two days since the Marshal met Frederick at

Ober Schellendorf, and signed an armistice. Neiss is in the hands of the Prussians. They have begun to take up their winter quarters in this province and the nearer circles of Bohemia. The Marshal, with the main body of our army, is on his march into Moravia."

"There has been no fighting, then?" said O'Connor. "How are all our fellows?"

"All well," said Turkheim; "no steps gone in the regiment. I think we shall all live to a good old age, and die in our beds. We have been left here to escort the hospitals to Glatz. As soon as the wounded can move, we are to follow the Marshal."

"I shall ask for a month's leave," said O'Connor; "as there is nothing doing, I may as well run down to Durrenstein for a few days."

"It is the best thing you can do," said

Turkheim. "You will be near the scene of war too, for all the army of Silesia has been ordered to join the Duke of Lorraine at Znaine-shear. Old Khevenhuller is coming up from Vienna, and should the Elector's movement on Prague leave Lobcowitz at liberty, he will also support the Duke with the brigade now at Pilsen."

"Well, my course is clear," said Allaster. "If I get leave I go to Durrenstein, and the moment I can sit a horse I join our fine fellows again."

"The post just come in, mein herr!" said Fritz, as he handed a packet to Allaster.

Turkheim left O'Connor to his letters. The packet contained a note from Alma, and a letter with the English and Irish post-marks.

O'Connor smiled as he glanced hurriedly over his cousin's few words of artless fondness and anxious tenderness; but

he almost trembled with eagerness as he opened Colonel Herbert's despatch.

DEAR O'CONNOR,

Your letter, dated Vienna, has revived all my old German reminiscences to a wondrous degree. I almost think I shall run over to you after the prorogation, and treat myself to a turn at amateur soldiering. I find I almost forget the sound of the drum or the smell of powder. I hope you have found Deepdene exactly what I described him to you—the best fellow on earth, and a delightful companion. You ask for news. There is not much worth exporting. Tom Blake has got into a scrape. The sheriff was looking after him, so Tom sent some of the Knockmore lads to meet poor Bob Higgins; they beat his fellows within an inch of their lives, and made Bob eat the writ, seal and all; though Bob first demurred on the

score of his conscience, it being Friday, and parchment being meat ; his objection was overruled with a tap of a stick. He then begged them to steep it in whiskey ; [this they had not at hand, so they made him wash it down with ditch-water, though he pleaded that he was too old to be put through the elements. However, as he had been dragging home a young wife but the week before, he was not allowed to refuse the proposed course of study on the excuse of his age. Bob is furious and vows vengeance, and Tom is in a terrible fright, and only shows on Sundays. I am going to register every man I can qualify. The Orange party are trying to get up a coalition to oust me. They had better take care how they meddle with me. Sir John is at his old tricks. He is such an inveterate double-dealer, that if his return depended on his walking up to the hustings openly, he would forfeit his

seat by skulking through the lanes and bye-ways. Temple is backing out of his engagement with me. He says he made me no promise of support, but merely expressed an intention of supporting me. Eel as he is, I shall find means to hold him to his word, and make an honest man of him. The Lord Lieutenant gives a challenge cup to the next Curragh meeting. I have entered my colt, young Godolphin, for it. He is out of the brown mare. The late doings of his brother Lath have damaged my book; the knowing ones will do nothing against him—they say the race is his own. The filly you broke for Julia has turned out right well, but is almost spoiled by idleness and pampering. The women never can bear to give a good nag a chance.

Your brother has purchased back Glen Clara from Plunket. He has got into a bad set, and is ruining himself stu-

pidly with a lot of low blacklegs and ungentlemanly roués. Father Eustace and Bryan have left Glen-Clara. I have employed Bryan as wood-ranger, and have settled him at the Recess. Father Eustace lives with him there. The old man is breaking fast ; while we were in the country Julia went frequently to see him.

Charley is here. He is on the Duke's staff. He and Julia are inseparable ; but though they are not to be married for some months, they seem to have fallen into the quiet jog-trot of a very sober happiness. She is not very strong. The gaiety of this place is too much for her. She is certainly the reigning beauty of this year, and I often wonder how philosophically Charley endures the crowd of adorers which surrounds her every night. After all, she gives him no cause for jealousy. Oscar is the only puppy she patronizes.

This is a woman's letter. I deserve praise for my skill in gossiping.

Yours truly,

ARTHUR HERBERT.

Herbert House, Dublin.

“She loves me still!” murmured O’Connor, with passionate tenderness, as he gazed on Julia’s name. “She loves me still, and never will she place between us the barrier of that loathsome loveless marriage. Julia—pulse of my heart—soul of my soul—thou shalt yet be mine.”

CHAPTER XI.

Her spirit pointed well the steel,
Which taught that felon heart to feel ;
I watched my time—I leagued with these
The traitor in his turn to seize ;
My wrath is wreaked—the deed is done—
And now I go—but go alone.

BYRON.

O'CONNOR'S convalescence progressed rapidly. He was already able to travel when the day came, on which the *ambulance*, escorted by the Gordon hussars, was to move out of Frankenstein. He had obtained his leave. Turkheim also had got

leave, for which he applied, because he would not tamely yield to despair, and resign Ottilie von Zichy without an effort to soothe her outraged feelings, and win her back to her repentant lover. He settled with Allaster that they should travel together as far as Vienna, whence the one should follow Ottilie to her schloss on the Platten See, while the other returned to Durrenstein.

On the evening before their journey, they strolled along the river. At some distance from the town, they seated themselves on a fallen tree. Around them were cliffs clothed with thick copse, and before them the rippling stream. Turkheim smoked. O'Connor, to whom that luxury was forbidden by Stilling, sat listening to the whirring call of the snipe among the reeds, and to the low splash caused by the trout which were rising merrily as the evening flies skimmed over the water.

They sat long in silence, although their late adventures had increased their intimacy, and led them into habits of unre-served confidence. Allaster was silent, because, while the stillness of the evening, and the lulling murmurs of the stream sank with a deep soothing influence on his senses, rendered more impressionable by recent illness, his thoughts dwelt with hope and trusting love on Julia ^{Herbert} ~~Herbert~~. Turkheim was silent, because some uneasy thought was gnawing at his heart's core. He was, however, the first to speak.

"Allaster," he said, abruptly, "do you believe in presentiments?"

"My feelings believe in them, although my reason rejects them," replied O'Connor; "reason tells me that the destinies of this earth and all its inhabitants were fixed before eternity gave birth to time, and yet I am not free from the superstition which clings to the soul of every

Irishman. But why do you ask this question, Karl ?”

“ Because I wish to speak the thought which oppresses me. For days I have felt as if some evil impended over my head. I can talk and laugh only with my lips ; even in the noisiest hour of our revel I hear a menacing voice muttering in my breast a dark prophecy of coming ill. I feel as if something invisible and yet impassable formed a barrier between me and all around me. Is it not strange ? Clara’s face, too, haunts me as I saw it last, when she hurled her blasting curse at my head.”

“ You cannot forget the unhappy girl,” said Allaster ; “ perhaps you feel some remorse for your conduct to her—perhaps your health is injured. Any of these causes might be sufficient to create a nervous depression of spirit. When you leave this place, and see Countess Zichy

once more, you will find that all these presentiments are but the false whispers of an unquiet spirit. A real, deep-felt sorrow, for a real keenly-enjoyed pleasure, disturbing the current of your life, may dispel those dark shadows, as this stone cast into the stream breaks and banishes the gloomy reflexion of that pine."

He threw a stone as he spoke into the darkening stream, where the reflexion of an aged pine was painted in deeper hues on the grey, soft tints of the water. The form of the pine was scattered for a moment, but as the light ripple roused by the sinking pebble subsided, the sombre shadowy image returned to its place.

"The shadow returns more spectral than before," said Turkheim, gloomily. After another silence he continued, "I shall be glad to leave this place. I have suffered much in that old town. A circumstance has occurred which, though I

scarcely like to mention it to you, so vague are the suspicions which it excites, yet tends to disturb my mind to an intolerable degree."

"What is it, Karl? Come, out with the secret; let us have no half confidences."

"For several days," said Turkheim, "I have been dogged by a man whose face I have never seen. When I open my window every morning, I see him pacing the street; at night, when I walk from the barrack to the Schwager Adler, where we sup, I see him but a few paces distant from me. He is always there, wrapped in his cloak, and the upper part of his face hidden by a broad Slavonian hat. If I stand and challenge him, he stands and faces me in silence. If I advance on him, and try to close with him, he retreats, and disappears for the moment."

"Is your persecutor like Herder?" in-

quired O'Connor, who began to think that this haunting apparition was very earthly and very dangerous. "Have you ever showed fight?"

"Once, as he stood taunting me with his silent menace, in the full moonlight, I presented a pistol at him; he laughed, and made no movement of defence or flight. I could not fire on an unarmed man."

"Have you pointed him out to any of our fellows?" asked O'Connor.

"No, I feared their ridicule," replied Turkheim; "when they are with me I dare not even turn my head to see this devil, and yet I feel that he is there—I feel his fixed gaze. If I saw a real peril—if he met me as a deadly foe, unmasked and openly, I would not flinch; but as it is, I shrink with a superstitious involuntary dread from his presence."

A mocking laugh answered Turkheim's words. It proceeded from the copse be-

hind their seat. The two young men darted into the thicket. It was thick with underwood, which shut out the fading twilight, so that their search was vain. They returned to their seat on the fallen pine, and there they saw that their concealed enemy had visited the place. Three small pieces of bark were cut from the trunk of the tree, and a knife was stuck into the wood.

O'Connor took up the knife—it was a sort of hunting knife, with a straight long blade, sharp at both sides, and a rough staghorn haft, with a small metal plate encrusted into one side. The little light which remained enabled O'Connor to read, engraved on this plate, the letters S. S. G. G.

“What mummery is this?” he said, as he handed the knife to Turkheim, and showed him the letters upon it, and the three chips of bark laid beside it.

“It is no mummary,” said Turkheim : “it is a warning of near and certain danger. Have you ever heard of the Vehm and the Red earth ?”

“You mean the secret tribunal of Westphalia ?” said O’Connor. “Of course I know all about it ; but surely that mysterious power is extinct. Has it not expired with the other institutions of the middle ages ?”

“It has fallen into desuetude, without having been formally abolished,” replied Karl. “Princes and nobles no longer meet at midnight beneath the sacred linden,—criminals no longer appear at the bidding of the midnight heralds to hear their doom,—the holy Vehm is not recognised by the empire as the irresponsible and irresistible representative of God’s providence and justice. But the peasants yet meet at Gehmeu in Westphalia, they take the oath of secrecy, and fulfil all the cere-

monies of the Vehm, as recorded by tradition ; everywhere throughout Germany you may find among the peasantry some of the initiated, whom their compeers regard with mingled awe and reverence. These men still claim a right to judge between the noble and the vassal. To these self-constituted judges the peasant appeals when he demands vengeance for any real or fancied wrong, which the common law cannot redress or avenge. He declares his wrong before the Wise Ones at their place of meeting, and on his oath the accused is condemned. The sentence pronounced at the Malplatz is held to justify the assassination it commands. The three chips, and the knife with the mysterious letters engraved on it, warn me that I have been doomed to death."

"What do the letters mean?" asked O'Connor.

"Stock, stein, gras, grein : stick, stone,

grass, grief," replied Turkheim ; " the initiated alone know what is the occult meaning attached to these words, but beyond the pale of the association they are supposed to express the sentence of death by dagger, rope, or poison."

" You must make your arm keep your head, Karl," said O'Connor ; " so said the Colonel to me when Richler fired at me. But threatened men live long ; so I am not much afraid of your mysterious persecutors. It is strange that they should give you a warning which must endanger the success of their plans. Assassins should strike in silence."

" They like to sip their vengeance drop by drop," said Turkheim. " Besides, by thus invoking the sanction of the secret tribunal they secure the connivance or the aid of the peasantry. Not a peasant in Germany would raise his voice to warn me of my danger, or extend his arm to ward

off the blow, if he saw the dagger at my back. But no matter, Allaster; since the danger has taken a tangible form, I care but little for it. A strong arm and a true blade shall judge between me and Herder. After all, I did his family some honour."

"An honour that I, in his place, would wash out with your blood, Karl," said O'Connor. "I pray you do not make a jest of that business. Forget it if you can. But on my life, Herder has nothing to do with this plot. I know him well. I have spent days with him angling in the forest streams near Hochberg, and a more honest, honourable man never walked on the face of God's earth, nor looked up to God's heaven with the trusting and quiet confidence of a clear conscience. So long as he accepts the dower you have settled on his daughter, you are safe from any vengeance from him."

They reached the town while thus talk-

ing, and turned into the Schwarzer Adler inn, where the hussars messed. O'Connor was joyously received by his comrades ; the supper was long, and the carouse was merry and deep, so that it was late when they adjourned to the barracks. Turkheim and O'Connor stayed behind the others to arrange with the host about the horses for their journey. The war had broken up the ordinary posting arrangements, so that the host of the Adler, who supplied the first team, was obliged to apply to a friend of his, who was a farmer near Reinerz, to furnish a set of fresh horses to take the travellers on to Saromirg, where post-horses might be found. The distance to Saromirg by the cross roads, which mine host intimated it would be advisable to take, was about fifty miles, a long journey with two teams of farm-horses on mountain roads. However, as there was no other means of making out their journey.

the young soldiers agreed to the plan proposed, paid for the horses, and named the hour at which they would set out.

“I am sorry you made our arrangement in the yard of the inn,” said O’Connor. “While you were speaking to the inn-keeper, I think I saw a tall man in a cloak lurking in the shadow of the stable-gate, and within ear-shot. I searched the place, however, but I could find no one in the archway.

Before O’Connor betook himself to his quarters at the Burgomaster’s, he escorted Turkheim to the barracks. On the way they looked in vain for Karl’s mysterious follower; but on the table in Turkheim’s room they found a packet, which his servant said had been delivered by a very tall masculine woman, who seemed to shun recognition by the care with which she muffled herself in a large hooded cloak.

"See!" said Turkheim, as he handed the parcel to Allaster. It contained the deed by which Karl had settled the annuity on Clara, and a letter, in which were written these words, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed. The broken heart slays as surely as the knife. Life for life! death for death!"

"This is serious," said Allaster, gravely. He returned slowly to his quarters, musing over the strange event of the evening. Fritz Dwyer was in grievous tribulation because he was to remain with the regiment, Mackenzie having promised to look after him, and to work O'Connor's horses, and see them taken care of in his absence. But in spite of poor Fritz's remonstrances at the cruelty of his fate, he was obliged to pack his master's portmanteau, to clean and load his pistols, and to complete all the preparations for the journey before he

ished him good night. When O'Connor found himself alone, he stood at the open window, meditating on Turkheim's position, until the church clock tolling midnight warned him to retire to rest. He was about to shut the casement, when a stone, thrown from the garden, rolled into the room. He picked it up, and found wrapped round it a slip of paper, with these words upon it, "Beware! separate yourself from Karl von Turkheim. He is doomed, the avenger will not spare; involve not yourself in his peril."

Allaster seized his sword in one hand, with the other grasped the window-sill, and letting himself down until his foot found a resting-place on the stem of the vine trained over the wall, he sprang into the garden.

The threats of danger to Turkheim were beginning to assume the appearance of a mystification, which tended to excite his

contempt for the warning, and his anger at the contrivers of this melodramatic plot. Had he found his anonymous correspondent, he would have administered a little wholesome chastisement, without respect to the apparently friendly meaning of the singular missive he had received. He searched, but he searched in vain; he traversed every thicket of shrubs, every alley of the espaliers; but he could find no one. The gate was locked; the narrow street beyond was still; there was no trace of the visitor's passage, except that the clematis, covering an arbour near the gate, was torn from the trellice, as if some one had climbed by it to the wall. Not wishing to disturb the slumbers, or to excite the curiosity of the Burgomaster's pretty daughters, by knocking for admittance to the house, he looked about for the gardener's ladder, by the aid of which he escalated his domicile.

They had ordered the horses for six o'clock, but in spite of mine host's promises, they did not make their appearance until ten o'clock, something having been found wrong about the calèche. However, all was right at last, and they started. Turkheim was more than usually taciturn. He believed that Clara was dead, and something like sorrow was stirring in his breast. He was as brave a fellow as ever belted sword or buckled spur; but yet the menaces of his secret enemies were not without some effect on his mind. The feeling that a doom was pronounced upon him, that a murderer dogged his steps, heard his words perhaps, noted perhaps his gestures, and meted out his numbered minutes, clung to his very soul with the weight of an invisible but rivetted fetter. He felt that he was not free.

O'Connor was glad that he accompa-

nied Turkheim, although the very manner in which the menaces were conveyed induced him to despise them. The attempt to revive the dark terrors of the Vehm on such an occasion, and to invest the private revenge of a peasant with the awful sanction of that inscrutable tribunal, was, in his estimation, rather the clumsy device of a stage villain than the act of a determined, single-minded man, seeking, from his own fixed heart and strong arm, a bloody vengeance for an unattonable wrong. He tried several times to rouse Turkheim from his abstraction, but without more than a momentary and imperfect success ; so abandoning him to the reflections which seemed to pre-occupy him, he threw himself back in his corner, and was soon deep in the sparkling but icy stream of wit which Voltaire pours over the pages of Zadig.

The journey to Reinerz was made in

silence. It was a soft grey day ; one of those autumnal days, when the mellow beauty of creation receives a touching and mournful charm from the first light hues of incipient decay. We would fain cling to those days, and woo them to stay their swift, silent flight ; just as in our own lives we seek to linger over the last years of parting youth, and treasure the melancholy sweetness of our last loves, because we feel that the one can return no more, and that the others are indeed the last. Such days exercise a profoundly depressing influence on most men ; our blood seems to flow in slower pulses ; our spirits respond less buoyantly to the call of hope, and yield more readily to the touch of sorrow ; our reason revolts against this involuntary and mysterious accord of our own natures with the universal nature, yet we must endure its strange despotism. Both O'Connor and Turkheim experienced this

sympathy with the external world ; and it was only by an effort that they were able, at last, to shake it off.

The farm where the host of the Schwarzer Adler had procured the relay of horses, which should take the travellers on to Sarmirg and bring back his calèche, lay between Reinerz and Korlsberg. It was a solitary homestead, surrounded by orchards and groves of trees forming an oasis of sylvan loveliness amid the lonely fertility of the wide plain, where the ripe and rustling corn was waving for miles around.

In Germany the villages crouch, hidden in the little valleys the cattle are kept in, and the traveller's eye ranges to weariness over the rich solitudes of the cultivated land. When the hussars reached the farm they found it almost deserted, the farmer and his wife and children being busy with their harvest labours ; but there was nothing to complain of, for the team was

ready, a young ploughman was prepared to drive, and a dainty stubenmadel prepared their dinner, and waited on them while they did ample justice to her good cheer.

The dinner consisted of sportsman's fare, a couple of trout and a brace of partridges. The girl was beautiful, and apparently of gipsey extraction. Her figure, lithe, rounded, graceful, and agile as a young leopardess, bore no resemblance to the massive German type. The profuse black hair, finely-chiselled features, clear brown skin, large lustrous eyes fringed with silky lashes, and the rich hue of her curving lips, betrayed the generous blood and ardent temperament of the child of the East; so did also the fine ankle and arched foot, which her short petticoat displayed most coquettishly.

"What a magnificent creature!" exclaimed Turkheim in French, as the girl

replied to his gaze of admiration by suddenly casting on him one of the magnetic, intoxicating glances of a woman who knows all the powers of her beauty. "If we should be quartered anywhere near here, I will see this flower of the fields once more."

"The gipsey is pretty, certainly," said O'Connor; "and so are the birds. If we should be quartered near here, I shall try for some partridge-shooting in those enormous stubble-fields."

"By Jove, Allaster, you would provoke a saint," exclaimed Karl. "I show you a delicious houri, and you say, 'The gipsey is pretty,' in the very tone of a priest of four-score."

"If you were just after a fever, and consequently wolfishly ravenous," said Allaster, laughing, "you would value a plump partridge more than all the pretty gipseys in the parish."

The horses were put to, the bill paid, O'Connor jumped into the carriage, followed by Karl, who had snatched one kiss from the kellnerin, and had been allowed by the relenting beauty to take another, with only so much resistance as enhanced its value.

Soon after the travellers had halted at the farm, a man, mounted on a stout, shaggy pony, appeared in their track. He turned his horse loose to graze in the wood, and then crept, cautiously and stealthily, into the orchard. An old apple-tree, whose laden boughs, drooping to the turf, formed a tent round the trunk, attracted his attention. He raised a bough, crept in, and lay crouching in the shade while the travellers remained in the house. Unseen himself, he saw everything that was done about the house.

So soon as the carriage rolled by his lurking-place he quitted his concealment,

mounted his pony, and followed the travellers, at a distance which enabled him to exercise a vigilant watch on them, without exposing him to their observation.

The dinner, prolonged by Karl's flirtation, had wasted more than an hour, so that it was late ere the travellers were again on the road. Karl's spirits had gained the ascendancy over his presentiments. The fresh breeze blowing in his face, the rapid motion, the wine he had drunk, and the gipsy girl's witching eyes, were, all combined, too much for the blue-devils. The dolorous imps were fairly routed, and the two young soldiers laughed and chatted gaily, while their fresh team, sportingly handled by their agricultural whip, in spite of his blouse, whirled them merrily over the wide plains, bounded by the blue and misty heights of the Sudetic mountains.

The short twilight was fading into

night, and the moon, high in heaven, grew brighter and more bright, as the glory of the sunset paled from the west. They had left the corn-fields behind, and now on every side extended broad unfenced pasturages, interspersed with thickets of copse-wood. Small ponds glittered here and there in the dim light, herds of cattle grazed in scattered groups in the tall grass. The rooks, winging their homeward way, cawed clamorously over head; the hollow, melancholy roar of a bull sometimes rolled over the pasture. No house, no smoke, no sign of human occupancy, gave life to the solitude. As they proceeded on their journey the ground became more undulating, and the mountain, assuming more form and substance, stood out more darkly defined against the silvery blue of the moon-lit sky.

The horses began to flag, and the ploughman, to relieve them, dismounted at

every long low swell of the ground, and walked beside his horse until he reached the summit. The chill of the night air struck cold on O'Connor's blood, for he had not yet regained all his native hardiness. He drew the leathern curtains of the calèche and threw himself back in his corner. Turkheim was already asleep, and O'Connor was just losing all consciousness of external things, when the tramp of a horse passing the calèche at full speed, aroused him. He looked out, and saw the man who had so untiringly tracked them all the day, sweeping, at the top of his nag's speed, across the plain on the right hand. Allaster drew in his head, and in a few minutes was sound asleep. The carriage rolled on—the travellers slept—the moon was high in heaven—the cattle lay on the dewy grass, and still the plain was solitary.

The sudden stopping of the carriage

roused the sleepers. They woke with a start—the curtains of the calèche were roughly torn back—the carriage was surrounded by men armed, masked, and muffled in dark bundas.

“Yield,” said the leader of the bandits, masked like his followers.

“Never!” exclaimed Turkheim. He seized his sabre and threw himself out of the carriage. The bandit parried his thrust with his clubbed musket, and in a moment more the sabre was shivered to the hilt, and Turkheim was unarmed and pinioned in the grasp of two of the outlaws.

O'Connor fired one of his pistols; the ball passed through the hat of one of the assailants; the second pistol missed fire, he flung it from him, and grasped his sabre which lay on the front seat of the carriage; but, before he could draw it, three of the bandits threw themselves on

him, disarmed him, and passing a rope round his arms, pinioned him as they just before secured Turkheim. The postilions had before been secured in the same rough but effectual manner.

The attack of the bandits, thus far completely successful, had been boldly executed; and appeared, to judge by the silent celerity of their proceedings, to have been maturely considered in all its details. Not a word was spoken by any of the masked and armed outlaws, after the first stern summons to surrender, uttered by the leader. O'Connor and Turkheim were not permitted to speak to each other. At a signal given by the chief, the horses were taken from the calèche, and tied to the trunk of a tree; the postilion was lifted into the carriage; and two ponies were led up to the captives, who by a silent gesture of the chief were commanded to mount. Resistance was alike impossible

and unadvisable. They obeyed. The outlaws, twelve in number, surrounded the captives; and following their chief, passed swiftly across the plain towards the mountains. As they rode side by side, O'Connor once spoke to Turkheim; but he had scarcely uttered a word, when the man who led his pony placed one finger of his own lip, and another on the trigger on his musket. O'Connor thought it more prudent to acquiesce in the wishes of his captors, thus significantly expressed.

The outlaws and the prisoners traversed the plain, bathed in the full moonlight; they mounted a swell, descended it on the other face, passed through a grove of aged trees, and crossing a shallow stream directed their course towards a wall of rock, dark, jagged, and massive as the battlements of an ancient city, which rose before them, towering in fantastic and giant masses, and extending to the base

of the Hensheune, the highest peak of the mountain frontier of Silesia. The uncertain and silvery light of the moon resting on every angle, left the recesses of the rocks in obscurity. The bandit leader guided his band towards one deep mass of shadow, and passing into it was lost to O'Connor's view. One by one the other outlaws followed. In their turn the captives were led into the yawning chasm, where darkness lay around them, and where the tramp of their horses rang hollow on the ear. Their passage through the rocks was short. In a moment they emerged into the light and the open air. They were in the rocky labrynth of Carlsberg. It was a wild and wondrous scene. The danger and fearful uncertainty of their position, lent a chilling horror to the mysterious fastness in which crime had sought a refuge. Deep fissures and crevices extended far on every side between

the rocks which rose in every form—pyramids, obelisks, towers, and even spires of mimic tracery, assuming the semblance of church and abbey, now clothed with pale dank stonecrop or dark ivy, now bare and bleached, as if those cliffs were the timeworn wrecks of an elder world. All was so still, that the footsteps of the band awoke the muttering echoes of the city of stone. They passed through the winding streets of this strange monument of nature's stupendous caprice, until they reached a comparatively open space. Before them rose a vast mass of stone, which assumed the form of a fortress; a solitary pine on the summit of the keep rose like a banner, showing a sombre cone in sharp relief against the sky.

At the base of the rock-fortress a stream issued from a crevice, and formed a still sleeping pool of unfathomed depth.

Here they halted. At a sign from the

leader the outlaws arranged themselves in a circle around the captives, who dismounted, and stood before the masked chief of that silent band. He stood in the centre of the open space, beside the pool, and there slowly and deliberately laid aside his bunda, and removed his mask. He made the sign of the cross on his breast and brow, and then, while he laid his left-hand on the hilt of his sword, he raised the right to heaven, and said,

“ My hand is pure from blood, my soul is clean from mortal sin. I here accuse Karl von Turkheim, as I before have accused him on the red earth and before the Wehm, of treachery, and sacrilege, and murder. For treble guilt, the treble doom is pronounced : Death to the traitor ! death to the sacriligious man ! death to the murderer ! May his blood be on my head, may his sins be on my soul, may my part

of heaven be his, if I have falsely accused him !”

The outlaw stood silent. Their leader gazed on the doomed soldier. Turkheim was, perhaps, more pale than was his wont, but his firm lip was compressed in stern defiance, and his bold brow was raised in calm enduring pride.

The bandit leader signed to his followers, and the bonds which bound Turkheim were severed by a stroke of a knife.

“Count von Turkheim,” said the outlaw, “make your peace with God !”

“What means this mummary !” said Turkheim, scornfully.

“It is not a mummary,” said the bandit. “I am Johann Herder, the betrothed of Clara Herder. I loved her, you won her from me : had you loved her, and made her happy, I could have forgiven you the ruin of my whole happiness. I could have

given my life for her, why should I refuse her the sacrifice of my happiness?"

He paused, and even there, in the hour of his triumph, and at the moment of his successful vengeance, he spoke in the low humble tone of a broken-hearted man. Turkheim there in his power, on the brink of the grave, was his rival, loved, honoured, successful with Clara. Oh, how even then, that true-hearted peasant envied him!

"You cast her off," he continued, "but what of that? The noble brought dishonour and sorrow to the hearth of the peasant, and the poor peasant should feel a proud gratitude even for the shame which gave a moment's gratification to the noble. Clara came home to die—like a poor wounded hare in her form. She forgave you—her father cursed you, and I arose to avenge her. Clara's avenger cannot be a common murderer,—I went to

Gehmen—I stood before the wise men who there uphold the customs of our fatherland. I told my tale of wrong. The judges pronounced your doom—life for life,—if Clara died, you should die.” He paused, and his strong frame quivered with anguish, but he manned himself and went on: “Clara is at peace—I announced her death, and sent you back the wealth with which you thought to buy her life. I dogged your steps,—had you even then shown remorse, I could perhaps have bidden you repent and live. But ere Clara’s grave was closed, I saw you toying gaily with the gipsy girl. I saw you smile in wanton mirth, while I felt that the world was desolate and void of hope, or joy, for me. Turkheim, you die!” He turned away for a space, and allowed the doomed man to approach O’Connor; who in the violence of his vain struggle to burst his bonds, had forced the blood through his

wrists, and now stood a helpless and shuddering witness of the tragedy.

“ This is a strange world, O’Connor,” said Turkheim with resolute levity. “ It is hard to die so young, but it skills not speaking of that now. Good-bye, my boy, commend me to our brave lads. I know there will be some true sorrow for Karl Turkheim at the revel and in the field. You will see Otilie : tell her I loved her to the last. You will find her letters in my writing-case, here is the key, give them to her, and say that I only parted with them and life together. And now good - bye once more ! ” He wrung O’Connor’s fettered hand, and looked steadily on the pale cheek and white lip of his friend. “ Courage, Allaster ; you have seen men die ere now : bid me good speed, and let us part ! ”

“ Farewell, God bless you, Karl ! ” was all O’Connor could say. He felt as if all

were but a ghastly feverish dream, from which he strove in vain to wake. His lip quivered, the large drops burst from his forehead and from the very palms of his hands, as he stood there tamely to see his friend die. Turkheim turned away from O'Connor, and faced the moon; he gave one last look to earth and heaven, muttered one short prayer, and then waved his hand to Johann.

“Here, fellow, do your work and make an end of it!” he exclaimed.

Johann Herder slowly drew a pistol from his belt, and cocking it, deliberately placed the muzzle upon Turkheim's forehead. “The Lord have mercy on your soul,” he said. Turkheim flinched not, shrank not, even when the cold metal touched his brow. Johann pressed the trigger—Karl sprang forward in the convulsion of the death struggle, and fell; he was dead ere the thundering echoes of the shot ceased to roar along the rocks.

Johann drew a purse from his breast, and cast it at the feet of the outlaws.

“ There,” he said, “ there is the gold with which I bought your aid. Take it, set that gentleman free: he knows me, but he knows not you, so that you are safe from any danger. I do not seek nor shun the fate which the laws of the land may deem me to have incurred. Mr. O’Connor, you are free ! ”

He severed O’Connor’s bonds, and motioned him to depart. O’Connor knelt beside Turkheim, and after gazing for a moment on the placid face of the dead man, he closed his eyes, and then standing beside the body of his murdered brother in arms, he said, “ My first act will be to denounce you ! Am I now free to depart ? ”

“ You saved her from the depths of the river,” replied Johann ; “ you are free. Départ and work your will on me.”

“Halt,” said one of the outlaws as he extended his musket so as to bar O’Connor’s passage — “Halt there ! Master Johann, you have settled your affairs, and you have paid us for our job, as was only reasonable, for you swore us not to plunder the carriage for fear our dirty hands should soil your dainty dish of revenge. I don’t complain, for you have come down handsomely; so as you paid for your whim, much good may it do you. But we did not swear to let this young gentleman into all our secrets, give him a plan of our castle, and then let him off safe and sound, to report us to the police, and to have us taken, like a brood of young partridges in a net, the next time we come here. Besides, I have an old score to clear off.”

As he spoke he cocked his musket, and suddenly raising it, fired at O’Connor. The ball passed over O’Connor’s head and fell back into the pool, flattened and shape-

less from the rock on which it struck. Johann had seized the outlaw's arm at the moment when he pulled the trigger, and thus saved O'Connor's life. He wrested the musket from the outlaw's grasp, and exclaimed sternly and resolutely,

“ Eichler, I say, you shall not harm him. I will have no murder done ! Your hire is paid, and for this day you are my servant.”

The presence of danger, menacing himself, had roused O'Connor from the chill waking trance of horror. He felt his blood rushing once more through his veins in its free warm current, and the daring spirit of his race kindled in his soul. Like the war-horse who hears the trumpet, he started into life and power. His keen glance scanned the group of outlaws. They stood irresolute, and seemed to take little interest in the argument between Johann and Eichler. He was certain of finding

some partisans among them, whom the promise of gold might induce to defend him.

“ I am willing to pay for my liberty,” he said ; “ name your price.”

“ Swear not to speak of what you have seen to-night,” said one of the outlaws.

“ I will not swear,” said O'Connor ; “ I will buy my life with gold, but not with my honour.” In the energy of his indignation he extended his hand as he spoke. One of the outlaws suddenly seized that hand, looked eagerly at the ring which it bore on the little finger, and cried,

“ Where did you get this ring, mein herr ? speak at once—speak as you value your life and liberty.”

“ A Prussian deserter, to whom I showed some kindness, gave it me.”

“ Where is Count Steinberg now ?” exclaimed the outlaw.

“ He is dead ; he shot himself after a

skirmish in which we defeated the Prussians."

"Comrades," said the outlaw, "I claim this man's liberty. I am the foster-brother of Count Henry. I was flogged for having allowed him to leave his tent to visit Count Ivon before his execution. When he saw my punishment he deserted. He is dead, and no mortal being shall hurt a hair of the head of this man who wears the signet ring he gave. Comrades, speak, is this man free?"

"Let him go in safety," replied the outlaws with one voice. O'Connor flung his purse among the bandits, and giving one last look at the stiffening form of Turkheim, turned to depart.

"Mein herr," said Johann, "I ask no mercy at your hands, but think of me as mercifully as you can. Hand me over to the gibbet if you will, but say to your own heart, that I loved and suffered much

—farewell.” He turned, and vanished among the rocks. Eichler, too, had disappeared. O’Connor remembered that he was unarmed. He took the pistols and sabre of the Prussian deserter, giving his watchchain in exchange for them. As he walked across the plain he saw a man following him. He cared little for that as he was armed. Eichler, for he it was, probably perceived that it was so, for he reached the calèche without interruption or annoyance.

Not a word!

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